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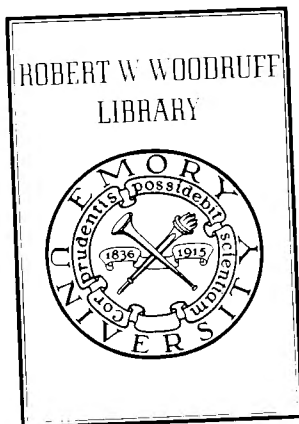
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COUSIN STELLA.

PART I.

“ *Of a rugged Colte comyth a gode Gors.* ”

CHAP. I.—A ROSE WITH A THORN.

AN unruffled lake, reflecting the glories of a setting sun—the dark Jura crowned with molten gold, looking down on its shadowy silhouette and shadowy diadem in the mirrow below—a few white-sailed boats, glinting for an instant like rosy sparks on the blue expanse, then dwindling gently away into the fast spreading shade. Such was the prospect. In the foreground an old stone house, with moss and lichen covering, yet widening perseveringly its many cracks and fissures—a house all hoary, wrinkled, and frowning. Two figures are at one of the windows: one of them, a girl of fifteen, or rather more, is leaning out; her elbows resting on a faded red cushion, her small dark face on a pair of thin hands, her eyes fixed with a look more of perplexity than enjoyment on lake, mountain, and sky. She is probably trying to harmonize the world within those ugly walls and the bright world without. “ *Eh bien! Mademoiselle, si je ne dois pas aller à la fête demain, je quitte Madame.* ” This was pronounced in a voice full of passionate vehemence by the second figure at the window; a handsome young woman, no longer a peasant, but the serving maiden of Mrs. Joddrell and her grand-daughter Stella Pepita Joddrell. Rose was a rose indeed. Health, and youth, and luxuriance of feminine proportion and of colour, made her not only the belle of her native village, but of the picturesque little town of Evian, in which stood the old stone house. Rose, in her quaint, flat, lace-frilled cap, like a dinner plate, knew herself to be a match, and more than a match,

for the smartest of the Evian artificial-flower makers in their best bonnets—consequently Rose was a most vigorous stickler for attendance at church and all processions. Neither for thunderstorm nor snowstorm, much less for the frowns of a heretic mistress, would she have missed, not to say the obligatory ordinances of her church, but not a feast, fast, or vigil. Rose of course maintained, perhaps believed, that religious scruples alone made her so unflinching an attendant on these occasions. Mademoiselle turned her large dark perplexed eyes from mountain and sky to Rose's flushed face, and answered in French with some impatience. "I think you might give up *one* fête when I have so begged it of you."

"But, Mademoiselle, remember, this is the Fête Dieu."

"Oh! no matter what fête it is. I know that, in your place, I would give up any fête for your sake."

"Chère Mademoiselle—pardon," and Rose showed symptoms of weeping, "but——it is my religion."

"Nonsense, Rose! what religion is there in dressing fine, and following after a priest, who claps two pieces of wood together when you are to kneel down, or turn round and make a courtesy?" and Miss Stella began imitating the evolutions of a priest in some procession she had witnessed.

"Mademoiselle Stella—c'est vrai—mais très vrai, ce qu'on dit de vous et de Madame—vous êtes des—des—Hébreuses!"

"Hérétiques! hérétiques! you preposterous Rose," cried Stella, laughing and clapping her hands.

At this stage of the conversation a rustling was heard, and a thin old lady entered the large half-finished saloon in which were the speakers. This was Mrs. Joddrell. She made a sort of half stop as she came in, but uttered not a word. Rose, with downcast eyes, instantly hurried out of the room by the door nearest to her: then, and not till then, Mrs. Joddrell pursued her way, and seating herself on a hard, narrow sofa, said in a dry, cold voice—"How often must I tell you, Stella, not to talk to servants?" Stella's countenance had been melancholy and meditative while gazing at the sunset; it had varied from impatience to mirth while speaking to Rose; it now looked mutinous as she replied to her grandmother: "It is the only way I have of learning French, grandmamma, and I don't see what harm it does. I think I should forget how to speak at all if it were not for poor Rose;" and Stella turned once more to look out of the window.

Mrs. Joddrell was on the very wrong side of sixty, but

looked even many years older, so bent her figure, so deep cut the lines of her face. Her sunken eyes rested for a little on the slender young figure leaning on the faded cushion, in such a languid, listless attitude, and the old lady's voice was slightly softened as she asked—"What are you looking at, child?"

"The world," answered the girl.

"And what do you think of the world?" with a touch of sarcasm in the tone.

"That it is very beautiful—that I should like to have friends, quantities of friends, and go and live in the world."

"Oh! indeed; that is some of your Auntie's talkie, talkie. So she tried to make you discontented, did she—to set you against me?"

"No, she did not; but when she comes here, it is so different—so very different. There must be plenty of people like Auntie in the world, it must be so pleasant."

There came a pause, the brightness of day was quite at an end. Twilight wrapped up the fair lake, and only a deeper grey marked to the familiar observer where the purple mountains stood. Mrs. Joddrell spoke again: "So you think you would find plenty of friends in the pleasant world? What is there about you to make friends?"

"I do not know, but people who live among people always have friends: Auntie has lots."

"Poor child! you really are fitted to live in the world," ejaculated Mrs. Joddrell, with contemptuous pity. "Auntie is quite a case in point, much to be envied for her friends. But Auntie is pretty, accomplished, with a good house; her friends court her to sing and play at their parties; it saves hiring professional musicians."

"I don't believe ladies and gentlemen are so mean," retorted Stella. "And why shouldn't I be pretty, and sing and play? I would do it with all my heart to make people love me. If you were to do what you promised papa—if you took me to Italy and Paris, and gave me masters as you did Auntie, I should grow the same as she is."

"So you reproach me, do you? That's the thanks I get for having taken all the responsibility of you, with your hot Spanish blood. Do you know that the Auntie you are always raving about would not have the trouble of you for anything."

"I never asked her," muttered the girl.

"And there are *not* plenty of people like your aunt,"—Mrs. Joddrell was waxing very wroth; "if you had all the

masters in the world, you would never be like her—friends, indeed !”

“Yes, I will have friends,” said the girl, resolutely. “I shall not care whether they love me much or little, I’ll love them with all my heart, and I’ll live with my family, and I won’t be buried in the bushes.”

“Shut the window, Miss, and go and practise.”

Stella closed the sash with violence, rang the bell loudly, and when Rose brought in the candles took one and went to the piano—a wretched thing, its sweetness all gone, its tones harsh, and strong, and confused. The young girl sat down before it, opened her music-book, squared her elbows. It was perfectly marvellous to watch the velocity of her long thin fingers, perfectly marvellous the strength she exhibited. She dealt blows on the ivory keys, as swift and strong as those of half a dozen smiths working in time on an anvil. Mrs. Joddrell drew some work out of a basket—a frock she was making for Stella. How tragical the face that bends over the muslin: sorrows of one kind or other have writ their story in mysterious, indelible characters on every feature! Stitch, stitch, the thread hisses as the old lady draws it rapidly and sharply. Ancestress and descendant have the same gestures. Stella’s frightful execution manifestly excites Mrs. Joddrell, but she makes no remark, until her grand-daughter begins the symphony of a popular Italian song, “*Benedetta sia la Madre.*” At the very first sound of the shrill childish tone, Mrs. Joddrell claps her hands to her ears, and exclaims, “For Heaven’s sake, child, be quiet; I can bear it no longer.” Stella was cruelly mortified; she did not care for scoldings about her playing, or her walking, or her manner of speech. The last too loud, the former too free, both more suited to the wild mountain side than to the precincts of a drawing-room. But this song, she had learned it in secret, meaning to give a pleasant surprise to her grandmother, for Mrs. Joddrell had often talked to her of her love for it, and of how charmingly Auntie had sung it, even before being taught to sing. Thus, when one day Stella had discovered the favourite among some old music, her ambition had been stirred to do something which should win for her a word of loving-kindness. Stella, so adjured, left the piano very quietly and unlike her usual quick movement. She sat down to work also, a tear at intervals rolling down her cheek. “Your tears fall for very little, Stella.”

"I cannot help it, Grandmamma."

Another silence, only broken by the click of the needles against the thimbles, and the cracking or whish of the thread. Stella first breaks her thread, then her needle, and finally throws down her work. "What a horrid gloomy place this is!" she sighs, looking round the lofty, large room, with its dozen faded velvet chairs, its two narrow, hard sofas, the scanty muslin curtains, the carpetless floor, the marquetry of which is shrinking each piece from its fellow, her eye at last lighting and fixing on the most desolate-looking object in the room—her grandmother. "Grandmamma, tell me about Auntie when she was young, and you used to take her to balls."

"What can I tell you, my dear?" returned Mrs. Joddrell, jerking her work. "When people are young, everyone flatters and courts them; when they are old, everyone neglects and ridicules them."

"People get what they deserve, I suppose," said Stella.

"No; not always. Deceit often prospers better than sincerity. I never could fawn on anyone, or say, or look, as if I approved when I did not."

"Is Auntie deceitful?"

"Your aunt is a woman of the world."

"And what does that mean?" asked Stella.

"You are a downright worry, child, with your questions."

"Well, Grandmamma, how can I know things if you don't tell me? I have nobody else to ask."

Mrs. Joddrell had risen from the sofa while Stella was still speaking, had opened her desk, and taken from it a small case made of plaited straw, like a card-case. She re-seated herself. "You said that, if I took you to Italy and Paris, you would grow pretty, like your aunt. Look at that," and, without allowing herself to glance at it, she drew from its hiding-place a miniature of a young lady, handing it to her grand-daughter. "*La chère petite!*" burst forth Stella, as she saw this picture of a beautiful girl of eighteen, and began showering kisses on the protecting glass.

"Give it me back, you foolish child."

"Oh, Grandmamma! just a little longer; dear little aunt, pretty little aunt! was she really like that?" Mrs. Joddrell put out her hand for the miniature; and this time as she held it, her glance sought the well-remembered innocent face, and she choked back a sigh, while drops of water moistened the

dry old eyes. Youth and beauty in tears is sometimes a touching sight; but ah! not heart-stirring like tears in aged, sunken eyes; legacy of remorse, even to the most deserving of children. Stella was not looking at her grandmother, and the idea that Mrs. Joddrell could weep had never entered her head. "Was Auntie ever really so beautiful as that picture, Grandmamma?" she reiterated.

"Yes; quite as lovely, twelve years ago. I shall never see anything like her again." A pause, and then Mrs. Joddrell continued in her usual voice: "Much good having her own way has done her! as if God did not put in a mother's heart the instinct of what is best for her children. God help me! God help me!" She took up her work again, and with her usual jerk stitched away passionately.

"Is Auntie's husband a bad man?" inquired Stella, looking anxiously in the stony face of her grandmother.

"You are always in extremes, Stella. Cannot you imagine that a person may be disagreeable and tiresome, without being what you call bad?" Then, as Stella remained pondering, Mrs. Joddrell added—"Don't go and accuse me of slandering Major Dashwood. The world calls him a delightful man. *So* good-natured; *so* easy to live with!"

"And is he not, Grandmamma?"

"I never saw the man yet, my dear, who was the same at home and abroad. They are none of them to be trusted."

"Did Auntie like him very much?"

"She liked her own way."

Another long silence, and then Stella said—"Grandmamma, I wish you would tell me all about my relations, about my mamma. I am old enough; in five months I shall be sixteen." Mrs. Joddrell went on with her work. Her inflexible face showed she was no common character. She had possessed, too, a constitution of iron to carry out the decisions of her strong, prompt will. Accustomed till within the last eight years to even the extreme of luxury, she never appeared to feel or suffer now from her self-imposed privations. With the income she still had, she might have lived like a queen at Evian. She chose to be economical even to miserliness. She could perform a noble and self-sacrificing action, and the moment after lacerate the heart of the one she had obliged by the most poignant sarcasm or the most ignoble suspicion. Passionate yet cold, sceptical yet bigoted, one instant calm in manner and word, the next, with or without provocation,

breaking out into anathemas delivered with the tragic vehemence of a Pythoness, Mrs. Joddrell had never restrained herself from sowing bitter impressions in the hearts within her sphere; and she nevertheless wondered when the seed sprang up, and overran and made desolate the garden of human affections. As she had lived, so would she die. Ever putting aside with jealous dread the cup brimming over with the draught of love. "What do you want to know about your relations?" she said, breaking her long silence.

"About my poor mamma?" this was spoken in a very low voice.

"I can tell you very little. I had never even heard of her existence, when you were presented to me. She was the child, your father said, of Spanish parents, natives of Cuba. She died very young—when you were born."

Stella was as white as paper; her voice came tremulously from between her quivering lips. "It did not make Papa hate me, did it?"

"It was the will of God to take her," answered Mrs. Joddrell, with gentleness.

"Am I ever to go back to Jamaica and live with Papa?"

"I do not know; probably, not till I am dead. You will not have to wait long."

"Oh, Grandmamma!" and the pent-up tears began to fall.

"I never expect either love or gratitude, Stella. I gave up all that long ago. I do my duty. Some day you will regret poor Grandmamma."

The softening or complaining of a stern nature is always overpowering. Everyone regards a shattered rock with a sort of respect. Stella answered in a quick, panting voice—"I do not want to leave you. I never will leave you, Grandmamma." Mrs. Joddrell went on drawing her thread with unvaried celerity, without looking at her agitated grandchild. "You will be much happier, you know, with your Auntie. She is not buried in the bushes; she is young and gay, and she will pet and flatter you; it's her way; the sooner you can go the better."

"Why do you say such things, Grandmamma?" The old lady gave a short dry laugh. "Why do you suspect everyone?" exclaimed the girl, angrily, and starting to her feet. "It is downright wicked. It is enough to keep anyone from loving you. I will never tell you again, no, never as long as I live, that I care for you!"

Mrs. Joddrell sat stitching away; when Stella stopped speaking, she said in a peculiarly quiet voice: "What have I done or said to put you in a passion?—a poor, helpless, deserted old woman!"

"You are not poor; you are not helpless nor deserted; Auntie loves you, and so does Papa."

"Ah! my dear, fine words are easy said, but I should like to have some proof of their truth." Mrs. Joddrell was not without proof, but it had really always seemed a necessity of her nature to urge everyone of her family into paroxysms of violence, which as soon as she had accomplished, her own equanimity returned; and strange to say, for a time her adversary or victim found favour with her, to find however, at the next outbreak, their catalogue of sins enriched by the one apparently forgiven. No one can have confidence in an irritable person; self-control is absolutely one of the greatest ingredients in affection.

Presently Stella went on with what sounded like the summing up of some private meditation: "It's quite deplorable to have such a bad family."

It was Mrs. Joddrell's turn now to look at Stella. "What on earth have you got in your silly head now?"

"I am sure I never heard any good of one of us. Old Aunt Gautier, she did something or other horrid; and Cousin Louis, don't you say he is a good-for-nothing, ungrateful fellow? Isn't Auntie always doing wrong? and haven't you warned me, till I am sick, that you could tell me what would take the pride out of me? I suppose we have had some wicked ancestor, and are a doomed set," wound up the young lady in a despairing tone.

"I think, child, you are enough to drive any reasonable woman distracted. What do you mean, eh?"

"There *are* doomed families, Grandmamma. I have read of them in the Old Testament and in some of Papa's old school-books; and I know, besides, of real living people. Are not the very Boccardi here under a curse? and is it not true that they all die an unnatural, violent death? and was it not prophesied that it should be so on account of their crimes centuries ago?"

"You are full of nonsensical superstitions. Remember what a goose you made of yourself about the *drowning seed*. Let me hear no more of all this folly about dooms and ancestors. I beg you will not make use of such words as 'curse,'

or bring me into trouble with the Gautiers, by saying I accused my sister of wrong-doing."

"You did say Aunt Gautier had behaved ill," said Stella, bluntly.

"There's no mystery as to that, Miss Pert. She married a nasty Frenchman against our father's will, and she has had to suffer for it. Disobedience to parents is visited even to the third generation."

"That's exactly what I call being doomed, Grandmamma."

"Come, come! it's ten o'clock, put away your work: it is time for prayers. And do not always be asking questions; it is very rude, to say the least of it."

The old lady and Stella put away the books and work strewn on tables and sofa. As Mrs. Joddrell locked up the miniature of her daughter, she laid her hand on her desk, saying—"Remember, Stella, all my jewels are in this; letters, papers, whatever it contains, is to be your Aunt's when I die."

"Why are you always talking of dying, Grandmamma?"

"Because death is the only thing living beings are sure of."

They went first to the kitchen to see that Rose had gone to her bed, and then they made the round of the large, desolate house; so damp, too, that, in spite of daily use, the locks rusted and the keys turned gratingly in them. Along the whole back of the building ran a wooden gallery, into which most of the rooms and corridors opened, and which was but a trifle above the level of a small garden—a wilderness of roses and jessamine, on which now lay the gentle light of the stars. The girl stepped out, and looked into an entrance, twenty feet at least below where she stood; either the court had been excavated, or the garden raised. "Perro, old Perro!" called Stella, and instantaneously a great black dog sprang up some grey, mouldy, crumbling steps, and, twisting himself like a snake, licked Stella's feet. "Good Perro," says she, stooping to put her arms round his neck, "it is better to have a dog to love one than nothing." The dog had a Spanish ancestry as well as his young mistress. Both had been confided by George Joddrell (Stella's father) to the care of his mother, some ten years previous. Stella tied her handkerchief round the old dog's throat, and so led him along till they found Mrs. Joddrell. She was sitting in the prettiest and most cheerful room in the old house. It had four doors, and over each was a painted panel, representing one of the Seasons, the female figures far above mediocrity. Mrs. Joddrell took no notice of

the entrance of her grandchild and the dog. She made no attempt to move; her eyes were wandering from a small bed, with fanciful drapery, to a Prie-Dieu chair, covered with fine tapestry work. In the centre of the back, within a wreath of flowers, were the initials C. J.; a footstool to match was before the chair. The work was faded but not moth-eaten; a large tiger's skin with silver claws was spread out on the floor; on either side of the mantel-piece, which was of sculptured marble, were tiny bookshelves of white and gold, filled with tiny gaily bound books. The furniture and books had belonged to Celia Joddrell, before she became Mrs. Dashwood, and Mrs. Joddrell carried it about with her wherever she went. Perro sniffed round the room as if to ascertain that all was right; when he came up to Mrs. Joddrell, he gazed up in her face, faintly wagged his tail, and suddenly gave out a low dismal howl. "Perro, old boy, what's the matter?" exclaimed Stella, patting him. He answered by another low howl. "Grandmamma?" cried Stella, with a sudden flutter at her heart.

"Well, of what are you afraid, Stella? You grow more superstitious every day." Mrs. Joddrell rose from her seat, passed her handkerchief over the diminutive books—contemplated one by one the bed, the chair, the footstool, the tiger-skin, all full of recollections—landmarks in her memory—did not sigh so as to be heard—she was surely an iron woman—tried the locks of the door, and then marshalled the way to a bedchamber next to the saloon. Anything more dreary than this apartment could scarcely be. A bed in an alcove, hidden by dark green serge curtains, for the grandmother; a curtainless stretcher between the windows for the granddaughter. The dog laid himself on a mat outside the door; as Mrs. Joddrell closed it, she said—"Get your Testament, Stella." Mrs. Joddrell's strong face looked stronger when she replaced the black lace that had covered her head during the day by a white muslin cap, with broad frills, and changed her black dress for a white wrapper. She looked like a marble effigy of a woman, rather than living flesh and blood. What a contrast hers to the earnest, speaking countenance of the girl, feeling in her heart's core every word she read! The chapter finished, Stella kneels down and prays aloud. Mrs. Joddrell folds her hands and listens, but her lips do not move, nor lose their rigidity.

The candle is out, and Stella sleeps, and smiles in her sleep;

she is dreaming of that pretty Auntie. And Mrs. Joddrell is awake, and for many hours of the night lies tossing her arms within the dark serge curtains, sighing out from time to time, "My God! what is this? what is this?" For many weeks past, at longer, then at shorter intervals, had this awful question hovered on Mrs. Joddrell's lips. Whatever her dread, it met no human ear; her defiant spirit would remain defiant to the last.



CHAP. II.—RESTLESS BONDAGE.

It was not the bright June sun forcing his early beams through the bars of the jalousies and playing on Stella's eyelids, that made her uncloset her eyes with a start. It was the stealthy opening of the bedroom door. Rose's pretty face peeped in—the wilful little head nodded a significant adieu, and vanished. The young lady, rising noiselessly, slipped into an adjoining dressing-closet. Not the first time by many that Mademoiselle had performed Rose's service, to shield the truant. A trifling act of goodness, certainly, but even the most trifling of good actions has this one beneficial effect, it makes the doer cheerful. Stella went into the kitchen as merry as a lark. Rose had lighted the charcoal, and placed the bouillote of water on it, thus sparing Stella the most difficult part of her task. While sweeping out and dusting the saloon, the young lady could not help thinking with envy of the great kisses Rose was without doubt receiving just at that moment from a hearty father, mother, brothers, sisters, and cousins of all degrees. Stella had once been allowed on Rose's name-day to accompany her to her home, and the manner in which Rose had been all but eaten up by her relations, was well remembered. Quite a child at the time, it made Stella understand her own loneliness, made her long for family affection. In recalling that scene now, she quite forgave Rose's obstinacy, and began to be very glad she had gone to the fête. When the baker's little girl brought the bread, Stella, in her desire to have some friendly greeting, suddenly kissed the very small maiden with the round black eyes, black as sloes, and gave her a moutta (fourpence). Stella had not many coins in her purse, yet it was not too much to pay for such a kiss and golden smile as she received in return. Well! she has buttered the hot rolls, folded them in a napkin, as Mrs. Joddrell

liked to have them, poured the boiling water on the coffee, scalded the milk, singing under her breath one of the child's songs she had learned from Rose's sister and predecessor—

“ J'aurai une robe,
J'aurai une robe,
Et de quoi ? d'écarlate, d'écarlate :
Tu n'en auras pas, tu n'en auras pas.”

It is a capital quality to be able to be happy on account of the happiness of others. The last touch to her preparations was given, and Stella knocked at the bedroom door to say that breakfast was ready. Mrs. Joddrell called to Stella : “ Bring me my coffee here, my dear ; I have had a bad night. It's cold ! it's abominable,” exclaimed Mrs. Joddrell : “ take it away.” Very much disconcerted, Stella disappeared with the tray : she reheated the coffee and strained it over again. “ It is smoked,” was Mrs. Joddrell's observation, and once more the cup was put down. “ You don't care, Stella, what I get. You are a most unfeeling girl ; you would starve me if you could ;” and to Stella's great terror, her grandmother burst into tears.

“ Indeed, I do care, Grandmamma ; I'll bring you a fresh cup directly.”

“ I wish your aunt were here,” sighed the old lady.

The third cup was more successful. Mrs. Joddrell swallowed a morsel of bread, and said she would like to sleep. Stella sat down in the large, scantily furnished saloon. For a long while she sat motionless ; from the street came the joyous hum of a festival ; how busy and friendly it sounded ! but neither the merry buzz, the bright summer sky, nor yet the thought of Rose's pleasure, could banish the faint-heartedness which had crept over her. She wished that Rose, her grandmother's and her own only friend in Evian, nay, throughout the wide space between Lake Lemán and England, would come home. Her thoughts were sometimes reminiscences, sometimes forebodings. The strokes of a strong, sweet chapel-bell roused her. The church-bells of Evian are all peculiarly sweet. The one that had awakened Stella from her meditations came from the convent of San Joseph, only separated from the old stone house by a broad alley leading down to the Lake. She went into the round room, formerly her play-room, and where she still kept her books and other girlish property. The windows overlooked the convent garden, and many and many a time had the good-natured sisters beckoned

to her, when she was younger, to come and join in the romps of their pupils. The sisters of San Joseph are not cloistered nuns; they devote themselves to teaching and other social duties. Mrs. Joddrell had been most positive in refusing to let Stella go among Roman Catholics. She had never allowed her either to enter one of the Evian churches. There was no Protestant place of worship there in 1827, nor is there any now in 1859. Mrs. Joddrell abhorred and avoided holy water as much as the Evil One is said to do. Stella, therefore, though in her sixteenth year, had no recollection of ever having been within the walls of a church. In the heaviness of her spirit she longed for the sight of the familiar figures in their white tippets, their hands hidden within the wide sleeves of their black gowns. Could she see a sister in the garden, she would bow and try to show by signs that she wished to speak to her, but the garden was empty—every one probably in the procession. To say the Joddrells knew not a soul in Evian but Rose is going too far; at all events, they had had one acquaintance, a *soi-disant* professor of music, a little hunchbacked man, named Hoche. This person's headquarters were in Evian, though he was as often away as at home; for he travelled in the vicinity to give lessons in singing and the piano, and did not disdain besides to repair musical instruments of all kinds.

Shortly after Mrs. Joddrell's instalment in the old house of Evian, the small, deformed professor of music had penetrated to her presence. Everyone else who had tried had failed. Mr. Hoche was a queer, sarcastic, sharp-nosed individual. He began by giving a catalogue of his own merits, he ended by laughing at them; laughed while describing his miserable position among the ignorant, bigoted boors of Evian; looked grave, however, when he spoke of the Heaven's boon that the advent of a real born lady was to him, and, finally, accomplished the intention of his visit, by inducing Mrs. Joddrell to purchase the wretched instrument he proudly offered as a specimen of his talent for repairs. Mr. Hoche became Stella's music-master, and continued to stand high in Mrs. Joddrell's favour. It would really seem that the old lady enjoyed his fantastic tricks, and the mysterious terror he produced in Stella. Hoche's face showed deformity as much as his figure. It was a very large face, its large features more or less awry. He could distort them besides in the most extraordinary and, to his pupil, most alarming way. He had

positively a real genius for music, and the little girl's blunders and false notes would make every nerve in his body quiver. He did not scold her, but, when he could endure no more, he would shove her away, take her place at the piano, produce the most unearthly chords, then swing himself round on the music-stool, and make such grimaces that Stella could have sworn he turned nose and eyes and mouth upside down. Her grandmother's laugh, far from being any encouragement, added to the cold creeping of the little girl's skin. She never cried or complained—only to Jeanneton, Rose's sister and predecessor, did she ever confide her wondering fears about Mr. Hoche, and this only after Jeanneton had told her a terrible story of a witch who had been ducked and drowned by the men of Jeanneton's own village. Stella had acquired by her grandmother's style of education an unusual power of self-repression and silent endurance, but a crisis came however, and it put an end to Mr. Hoche's instructions. In one of the sudden squalls, to which, like all large lakes, the lake of Geneva is subject; a boat belonging to Evian upset in sight of the windows of the old house, and the crew were drowned. The bodies were recovered, all save one. Jeanneton related to Mrs. Joddrell, in Stella's presence, the great distress of the widows, in particular of the one whose husband could not receive Christian burial. Mrs. Joddrell had sent money to each of the bereaved families; she now gave an additional sum to pay the expense of another search for the missing corpse. In vain; the lake held its prey, and would hold it till the great Day should force its deliverance. Stella was greatly troubled for this poor widow's sake, and to her Jeanneton said in confidence, that there was a way by which the body might be recovered; there was a seed, if the widow could get *that*! "And why does not the poor woman buy some?" inquired the undoubting listener.

"Oh, Miss, it is not so easy to get, only the wise folk know about it; but if you throw ever so little on the water, it will run along just as if it were alive, and never stop till it comes to just over where the dead body is lying."

"Where could one buy it, Jeanneton?"

Jeanneton shook her head. "Those who have it, don't like it to be known; and if you anger them they make you remember it."

"Do you think Mr. Hoche knows about the seed?" whispered the child.

"*Dame!* like enough; he's too ugly for a Christian."

Stella had no rest for the pungent thoughts of the widow's grief, so on Jeanneton's hint she spoke to her music-master. Mr. Hoche, mad with passion, on being so openly told that he looked like a wizard, swore he would never cross the threshold of the old house again. He kept his word in spite of Mrs. Joddrell's excuses and promises to punish Stella, in spite of Stella's humble prayers that he would forgive her. This was the history of the "drowning seed" alluded to by Mrs. Joddrell. And in this horrible conjuncture, happening to pass the door of the round room, the old lady had overheard the child saying, in an excited voice—"Robbick, you know she can but kill my body."

An unknown child's voice answered—"My dear sister, you are only to care for those who can kill the soul."

Surprised and alarmed, Mrs. Joddrell pushed open the door, looking sharply about her; there was no one visible but Stella. "To whom are you speaking, Stella?" Stella hung her head, then in a whisper—"To my eldest air-brother, grandmamma." In her great need of playfellows, Stella had invented air-brothers, and one air-sister. Robbick was the favourite and adviser, the others were playfellows, and were named Bird's-bone, Bull's-horn, Horse's-head, and the sister, Merrick. Why these names? What did they mean? Who can explain the vagaries of a lonely child's imagination? Her air-brothers and sister were the mystery and delight of Stella's life; instead of playing egotistically at "my lady in her coach going to visit," she tried to amuse these air-comrades by telling them all the stories she read or was told. It was a pity her grandmother had never overheard her relating the history of "Joseph sold into bondage." It was told in a dramatic form, with all the "says he" that make a story sound so real; the loneliness of the Hebrew boy, with no father, no mother to love him, or take care of him when he was sick, or to kiss him when he went to bed, were feelingly dwelt upon. The air-brothers were also playmates; often they had games of hide-and-seek, and puss-in-the-corner, and that with so much animation, and with such rapid and complete changes of voice, that you could have understood the game as if you had actually seen it.

Mrs. Joddrell did not love Stella as most women do their first grandchild. The little creature reminded her in nothing of either of her own children. She was a brunette, and her

father and aunt were dazzlingly fair. Stella's Spanish complexion was a species of disgrace, in the eyes of a lady who had spent most of her life among blacks. She rough-handled Stella as she had never done either George or Celia, but there was an innate courage in the child which preserved her truthful. She often dared the utmost severity of her grandmother, rather than say the thing that was not. It was not in woman's nature to withhold forgiveness from a little culprit so prepared to endure punishment.

It will be fitting to say here, as shortly as possible, how the grandmother and grandchild came to be domiciled in this out-of-the-way town of Savoy. Mrs. Joddrell was the widow of a rich West Indian planter—such beings did exist in Mrs. Joddrell's time. She was the mother of two children; a son and daughter. George, Stella's father, now lived on the paternal estates in Jamaica; Celia, the daughter, was the wife of Major Dashwood, late of the staff corps. Ten years before the opening of this story, George Joddrell had brought to England, to place under his mother's care, his motherless six-year-old Stella. Till that moment, as she had told Stella, Mrs. Joddrell had been in ignorance of her son's marriage. At the same period, her son-in-law was placed on half-pay; and to the shock of her son's previous want of confidence was added the pang of Major and Mrs. Dashwood declining her proposal that they should take up house together. "After so much as I have done for my children," exclaimed the disappointed lady, "that they should show me neither affection nor confidence!" Poor Mrs. Joddrell! it was her creed, that children must love their parents whether or no; she never took into account how human nature rebels against duty; she never dreamed of original sin coming between her heart and theirs, if she did not set an example of gentleness, and forbearance, and long-suffering. George and Celia early learned deceit, in order to avoid violence and injustice; neither respect, nor trust, not even the familiarity of child's love, united them to their mother. How could they, while she tortured them, believe that they were her idols; that jealousy for their exclusive affection caused their torment? In vain did Celia protest that it was from motives of prudence that Major Dashwood decided on their living with his aunt, Miss Philadelphia Dashwood, to whose fortune, unless she married in her old age, the Major was heir. "We go to her that we may take care of our interests, mamma," assured Celia. Mrs.

Joddrell did not believe her daughter. She knew that she was too timid to tell the truth, and say, "Mamma, you would never let me have my own way." Mrs. Joddrell smiled bitterly as the thoughtless Celia detailed to her the care she had taken to secure independence in her domestic arrangements with old Miss Philly. "My own drawing-room, my own servants, my own visiting-list." Yes—yes! Mrs. Joddrell understood it all. In a paroxysm of bitterness she gave up her house, sold her furniture, and, as soon as her son sailed for Jamaica, crossed the Channel with her young charge; resolved to renounce her habits, her country—even her family. This voluntary exile was from a thirst for vengeance; it would give a life-long remorse, she trusted, to the daughter she adored. Geneva was Mrs. Joddrell's first resting-place. She did not like it; she met there too many English, of her world. She sought round the lake for some retirement, and thus chanced on the hoary house in Evian. She was told it had once been tenanted by an Englishman, who had restored to the principal apartments much of their original richness of decoration, besides putting the whole building into habitable repair. The traditions of the wealth and splendour of this Englishman still live in Evian. Within a mile of the town, on the road to Meilleraie, is an oblong space of turf surrounded by trees of great and symmetrical height and size. This space is yet called "the Englishman's ball-room," for here the rich man gave a fête that has never been rivalled in that district. The countless coloured lamps which garlanded the trees, and hung from their branches, sent their radiance, it is said, across the lake to Lausanne. The Englishman's caprice for Evian was short-lived, and from his time no one had occupied the old stone house. Its air of decayed grandeur, its lofty halls, its endless passages, chimed in well with Mrs. Joddrell's tastes; she was soothed by some similarity between its decay and desertion and her own. "What was the name of that Englishman?" she inquired. The sound made by the Savoyard house-agent she took for granted meant Beckford. He, too, was a West Indian. Yes! she would take the house. Stella was too young for any teaching but her own; by-and-by, she would take her to Italy and Paris. As the green mildew eat silently away, first, the strong stones of the hoary house, then crept through chinks and crannies, stealing the bright colours from the frescoes of the guest-chambers, unfastening the paper-hangings, running riot with red rust here, with white fur

there, Mrs. Joddrell loved the old house better and better—it maintained its sympathy with her.

In the course of years, Jeanneton had married, and gone away, Rose taking her place; but no other stranger had ever entered the house, not even during the two visits Celia had paid to her mother. Mr. Hoche had revenged himself, though his victims knew it not. He had described Mrs. Joddrell as a Megæra, doubtless full of crime, and Stella her familiar monkey. Everyone drew back from the solitary pair in their walks; and the very beggar who accepted a sous from them, spat on it, and in his frightful patois denounced them as worse than Protestants. As Stella's mind developed, her air-brothers faded and faded, till they vanished; they left her to extreme loneliness. Not only had she longing for companionship, but strong impulses were stirring within her to accomplish something—she knew not what; she had a craving after knowledge of all kinds; she wanted arrows to take aim—at what she could not tell; but at some object very high. The tiny books on the tiny shelves had been read, nay devoured, and had taught her this—to be impatient of her present life. But not only had she aspirations, she had fears; her grandmother's taunts, few and far between as they were, seemed to point at some mystery which stamped her as differing from those of her kindred whom she knew. Why should she not play at acting? The rebuke, and still more its tone and emphasis, were remembered. What was acting? Stella had never known the delights of a pantomime or Astley's, never even seen a circus at a fair. Once she had thrilled with delight and terror at the sight of a little girl of her own size, in dirty spangled jacket and petticoat, dancing on a rope. The heaviest slap Mrs. Joddrell had ever bestowed on her was when, in a spirit of emulation, she had tried to balance herself on the back of a chair. "Gipsy once, gipsy always," were the scornful words that broke from a lip protruded with unmistakeable disgust. Lately, Stella had felt a rising rebellion against the parent who inflicted on her ignorance and almost solitary confinement; the old house she likened to some lonely castle, herself to a prisoner. She would write to her father and complain; then the sight of her grandmother's worn face, the stoop of the once erect figure, the foot leaving the ground evidently less and less, seemed to reproach her and say, "Wait a little, only a little!"

What rich floods of affection were shut up in that young

girl's heart, ready to force their way out ! Her grandmother might have been renovated to happiness in those sweet waters, had she so chosen. It was not in her nature to draw forth love, or perhaps some fierce love-fire had hardened and sealed up the door of her heart. No one knew ; no one can ever know. The original of a washed-out picture, the colourless ivory still in her desk, might have told ; but who among the living, unless her absent sister, Madam Gautier, remembered Mrs. Joddrell's early life ?



CHAP. III.—DREADED FREEDOM.

SROOPING more than usual, and hesitating in her walk, the old lady came into the room, and took her way silently to the sofa. Stella stood up, ready for orders. "Bring me some wine, child." Mrs. Joddrell drank a large glassful with avidity. "Where is Rose ?" Stella braced herself to bear a tempest of anger.

"She is gone to church, grandmamma." No answer, but a deep sigh.

"Write to your aunt, and ask when she is coming to see us ? Write to-day, and say my head is so giddy that I cannot hold a pen."

"Shall I tell her you want her to come ?"

"No ; let her do as she likes."

Stella was accustomed to obey her grandmother implicitly, even when she inwardly rebelled. She wrote the letter ; showed it to Mrs. Joddrell, whose only remark was, "How badly you write ! my children write beautifully, and I taught them."

"The third generation is falling off," said Stella, laughing ; "for my cousin Louis writes very badly, I know."

Mrs. Joddrell did not carry on the subject. Stella looked at her, and had what the French call a *serrement de cœur*, a tightening of the heart ; and on the instant impulsively added to her letter two lines, praying her aunt to come at once, with the additional remark, "I am afraid about grandmamma." Grandmamma's sharp eyes watched the addition of a post-script ; usually so scrutinising, to-day she asked no questions. The letter was sealed, but there was no Rose to send out with it to the post-office. "Are you afraid to go alone ?"

"Oh, no ! grandmamma."

"Better not lose a post, Stella."

The fête was at its height. Seeing the rival *reposoirs* (movable altars) passing under innumerable moss chains, from which fluttered paper doves, paper hearts, hearing the sweet voices of the young girls belonging to the church choir mingling with the rough basses of the men's confraternities, all seen and heard as if in a dream, Stella ran to the *Bureau de Poste*, dreading it might be already shut on account of the festival. The clerk of the post was desperately tipsy, and let her take the bag he was sealing, open it, and put in her letter. The idea that Mrs. Joddrell was going to die had fixed itself in Stella's brain, and with the idea had come such a grief, as if she never could be happy again, should she lose this stern grandmother. Strange fascination *that* possessed by habit ! we fret and fume against what we have ; the instant we conjecture the removal is at hand, lo ! we clutch at it, as if it had been the acknowledged treasure of our lives. Stella, as she was hastening home, saw Mr. Hoche standing at the door of the carabineers' guard-house. He scowled at her, and evidently pointed her out to the soldiers—a bad omen, poor Stella thought. On her return, she found Mrs. Joddrell lying doubled up in one corner of the sofa. "Are you ill, grandmamma ?"

"I am dying, my dear."

A sobbing shriek of "Let me go for a doctor—let me go for a doctor," answered the horrible announcement. "Send if you like, though I do not know if there be a doctor in this stupid place ; do not cry, it pains me." Stella had no one to send ; she stopped crying, however, by force of will, and once more left the house—this time to seek Mr. Hoche himself ; he was angry with her, but he was the only creature she knew.

"Will you tell me where the best doctor lives, sir ?" going up to him.

"Eh ! eh ! I am not sorcerer enough to tell you that, mademoiselle."

"I was an ignorant child when I offended you, sir !" the young face was lined with agony. "My poor grandmamma is dying," the sob in her throat would rise. "You are the only person I know here."

"Stand back," cried Mr. Hoche, as the priest heading the procession approached. Children with their gauze wings,

white frocks and curled hair to simulate angels, were hovering on either side, then three nuns in black with long veils leading a group of young girls, all in white from head to foot, came on. Shrill, yet indescribably touching, the singing:

“Pange, lingua, gloriosi
Corporis mysterium,
Sanguinisque pretiosi,
Quem in mundi pretium.”

“Sing, my tongue, the Saviour’s glory,
Of his flesh the mystery sing,
Of the blood, all price exceeding,
Shed by our immortal King.”

Mr. Hoche’s discordant tones shouted out the hymn; then he stopped, whispered to Stella—“Mère Thérèse has a diploma; go to the convent and ask for her. If she cannot cure the body, she may do something for the soul.” He turned away, and went on shouting responses louder than any one else.

“Go to the convent and ask for a nun!” Stella who had been even forbidden to look at nuns! But inexorable necessity forced her to the dreaded door of the sisters of San Joseph; she really trembled as she rang the dispensary bell. “Entrez:” and with a mental shock, she found herself face to face with Mère Thérèse herself—a flat-faced, stout, short female, the very picture of content. Stella’s errand might have been one of daily occurrence, for any emotion it called up on the mother’s face. She asked few questions—but enlarged on the fact that diplomas of medicine were only granted to those sisters who were considered peculiarly gifted, told Stella—while she went to Madame Supérieure for leave—to look at the museum in the ante-room; about the rarities of which Sister Consolazione lectured to the pupils. Stella’s fright augmented when she found herself actually going back with a nun instead of a doctor—still she felt a comfort in having a woman with her. Mère Thérèse asked where Rose was; the mother knew all concerning the old house establishment apparently; and as she trotted through the damp court, remarked that such a place was not suitable for an old lady. “Had she no family to look after her?”

“Yes; Stella had written that day to Mrs. Joddrell’s daughter.”

Mrs. Joddrell looked surprised, and then angry at the nun. Mère Thérèse did not heed looks; she felt the old lady’s pulse, nodding in too cordial and cheering a manner for any one

really ill and alone in a foreign land long to be resentful. It was wonderful the deft activity of the stout heavy-limbed sister of San Joseph. She moved even noiselessly over the disjointed floors, now preparing a fever beverage, now arranging the bed-chamber. Shrewd penetration was still less to be expected from the owner of the common-place countenance. It has been said that the most alarming penetration comes forth from the cell of an anchorite; that all persons living an unsocial, single, solitary life acquire a double sight, one that sees clearly into your inner being, besides the common and more usual vision. Be the case so or not with recluses in general, the fact is that Mère Thérèse did easily divine the principal subject of Mrs. Joddrell's thoughts. Communication by speech was not easy, so pantomime was called on to help. At a moment when Stella was at the other end of the room, Mère Thérèse whispered to her patient, while pointing to the young lady—"Ne vous inquiétez pas, chère dame, à cause de la petite—moi, je m'en charge jusqu'à l'arrivée de madame sa tante." The nun laid her two thumbs together so as to form a cross, and then kissed them by way of sign and seal to her promise.

Of what avail to describe the next fortnight, during which the sad mystery of the parting between soul and body was being accomplished in the old house! Stella was almost as pale as the poor old lady; but her fortitude and activity never failed. She was on her feet the whole day; even the greater part of the night. There was such controlled agony in her constant cry of "Grandmamma, can't you take this? if you could only eat, you would be well," that it brought tears into Mère Thérèse's eyes, and made Mrs. Joddrell smile and try to swallow. As each morning the curtains of the window were withdrawn and the *jalousies* opened, there was more and more of impatience in Mrs. Joddrell's questions of, "How many days is it, Stella, since you wrote to your aunt?" The eleventh day since Mère Thérèse had entered the old house was come. She will not have to remain much longer. "Is your aunt's room ready?" asked the dying woman.

"Yes; it is all ready—the bed is made."

That evening Mrs. Dashwood jumped out of a carriage, and ran past Rose and Mère Thérèse, without a question, till she saw Stella. "Auntie, you *are* come at last."

"I have not been in bed since your letter reached me," replied Celia.

Aunt and niece entered Mrs. Joddrell's room together. A spasm passed over the ashy gray face. "Mamma," came forth in a sob.

"You have come to an uncomfortable house, Celia."

"Oh! Mamma, if it were a palace, what would it matter, now?"

Mrs. Joddrell closed her eyes, and Celia, unable to stand, took the chair at the foot of the bed. Her face was buried in her hands. She was giddy and faint with fatigue and emotion. Mrs. Joddrell broke the silence. "Celia, when you were a little child, you used to say, 'Mamma, shall I amuse you?' and then you would bring your spelling-book and read aloud, 'There's a time to sow and a time to reap.'" Celia gave her mother such a look that involuntarily Mrs. Joddrell exclaimed "My poor Celia!" The daughter sprang forward, and felt her mother's hands caressing her head as they had not done since she was the little child of the spelling-book. A doctor from Geneva was with Mrs. Dashwood, and now ventured, uncalled for, into the room. "What is he come for? What is the use of such an expense?"

"To try and do you good, mamma."

Dr. P——, after feeling the sick woman's pulse, and studying her physiognomy, drew a small phial from his pocket, and putting a few drops into a wine-glass full of water, held it to Mrs. Joddrell's lips. "Why can't you let an old woman die in peace?" she asked. As she spoke, she caught a glimpse of Celia's tortured face. "To satisfy you, my dear," and the dose of ether was swallowed.

The struggle was not long after that. Mrs. Joddrell exacted a promise from her daughter that Stella should be sent to her father. "You are *not* to keep her with you." The ruling passion was strong in death. No questions were asked by the daughter except that usual heart-breaking one, "Is there anything in the world I can do for you—any wish—anything on your mind?"

"Nothing, my dear: Stella understands what to do."

At last there came a request, "Don't forget me," not addressed apparently to any one in particular; a dovelike expression took, and kept, possession of the hitherto stern eyes, until they were piously closed. After it was all over, Stella slept, scarcely once waking for twenty-four hours—twenty-four hours in which poor Celia's heart felt breaking. A terrible time when memory paints only one side of the

past; and that the one which condemns the best of survivors. Words, more than actions, rose up vividly as at the instant they were uttered; and the daughter watching by the side of the motionless form, with its face so calm now, though marked by suffering as its own, wondered how anything should ever have provoked a retort from her. Celia sat through that first night, by that solemn bed, her spirit steeped in bitterness. She had forgotten provocation, injustice, harshness; memory did not portray them. The nun and the physician spared her all the harrowing details that follow a death. She was a loving creature, Celia Jodrell: how was it that, from childhood upwards, she had had to live with people she either could not love, or who could not love her? When Stella awoke from her sleep, she had a quiet conversation with Mère Thérèse. She then busied herself silently gathering all her own and her grandmother's property together. She helped Rose, to the astonishment of Mrs. Dashwood's maid, who treated her accordingly. In the evening she cut all the white roses off the bush in the garden, and went silently into the room where Death was. Celia had been persuaded to take some rest. Silently Stella spread the flowers over the white motionless figure, putting one close to the right hand; looked alarmed for an instant, then, stooping, kissed the brow, and knelt down, trying to say steadily, "Grandmamma, I will be good. Grandmamma, grandmamma, will you never speak to me again? Poor grandmamma! poor grandmamma!" Mère Thérèse came to her, with a quantity of lovely, fresh-gathered "forget-me-nots." "Mr. Hoche sent them," said Mère Thérèse.

"I know where they came from," said the girl—"from our favourite walk. Grandmamma, we shall never go out together again! Madame," (to the nun) "you do not know how badly I used to behave. I shall never be happy again." The bells rang out their chimes. "Grandmamma cannot hear them now: she said they were the sweetest she had ever heard. Madame, do comfort me! pray, do comfort me!"

"Pray, poor child," said the nun, grave and calm. She gently forced Stella to her knees, folded her hands, holding them within her own rough prayerful ones. "Pray to God. Pray to Him now and always, and He will comfort you."

CHAP. IV.—SWEET HOME.

WATERLOO COTTAGE was a long, low, detached building, spreading over a good deal of ground, with green verandahs to the two stories of which it alone consisted. It stood—for it stands no longer—within a low wall, surmounted by a high iron railing, at right angles with one of the roads leading from Kilburn to Hampstead, the small garden in front expanding into a large one behind. The casement windows, both above and below, opened on to the verandahs, filled in summer with flowers of every hue. Up slender pillars clustered roses and passion-flowers, hiding the ivy and Virginian creeper, which only waited, however, for winter to make good their claims to notice. Waterloo Cottage, in a word, was one of those dwellings, the sight of which develops pleasant associations, and excites one to covet one's neighbour's house.

Six weeks after the death of Mrs. Joddrell, on a dull, blustering day in the last week of September, at that uncertain hour when parting light still struggles with coming darkness, a hackney-coach stopped at the gate. "Here we are at last!" exclaimed Major Dashwood, jumping out of the coach. He had met his wife and Stella at the White Horse Cellar. A grizzly-haired negro, in a suit of pepper-and-salt, came out to the travellers, his eyes so wide open that a circle of white was visible round the black irids.

"Hi, me missus!" and the shrivelled hands, with their yellow palms, seized the small-gloved ones of Mrs. Dashwood. "My heart sore for you, missus—me dar missus," and heavy tears came to bear witness to old Pompey's words. "Dis Massa Joddrell darter! glad to see you, young missus."

In the meantime Major Dashwood was helping the coachman to bring in the luggage. The Major was so cheerful and bustling, you might have fancied they were guests from a wedding. When Stella and her aunt entered the dining-room, the scene that presented itself was one very consoling to persons just arrived after a cold, damp journey. There was a bright sea-coal fire, a singing kettle, and a large white cat spread out on the Persian rug, purring in its dreams. At the well-covered tea-table sat a stout old gentlewoman, Aunt Philly herself. She had probably taken a nap after dinner, as her high silk head-dress, something of the nature of a

turban, called in those days "a toque," was visibly awry. There was comfort in the closed shutters, against which the wind was rattling the fallen leaves; comfort in the thick crimson curtains, in the blazing fire, in the purring of the luxurious cat, in the well-clothed stout old lady, in the warm quiet of the room, even in the dimly burning pair of mould candles. There was nothing active or wide-awake to be seen. Aunt Philly only shook hands with her nephew's wife, and made a low, old-fashioned curtsey to Stella, who, looking both awkward and frightened, said,—“How do you do, ma'am?”

“Quite well, I thank you, miss,” answered Aunt Philly. “You are a day before the time you fixed, Mrs. Dashwood, but you will find everything prepared for you;” and the speaker compressed her lips like one who had discovered the uselessness of rebuke in certain quarters.

“I was sure of that, ma'am, or I should not have come,” answered Celia, carelessly; then whispered to Stella—

“This is Aunt P——’s domain; the drawing-room is mine.”

Yes, the scene was excellent: one of those English interiors considered peculiarly the result of English laws, the growth of English soil. Paint it.—A lovely young woman on a sofa, a handsome husband placing a footstool under her feet; a respectable old lady, a model for ‘any one bent on delineating motherly love, presiding at the rich tea-table; a young girl in her teens, to be the object of anxious interest to those so happily themselves in harbour. Even behold an attached old servant in the background, completing the picture. How is it in reality? The dear old lady makes the room ring with a species of shout. “You stupid creature, mind what you are doing!” This was addressed to the attached old Pompey, waddling forward with a large salver; the wine-glasses and decanter on it making an ominous jingle. “Who told you to bring wine?”

“Massa say——”

“What has ‘massa’ to do with it?”

Here Celia said sharply to her husband—“What makes you interfere? As you choose to live here, you know it’s no business of yours to give orders.”

“This is not your wine, ma’am,” said the Major. “I brought it with me to drink Celia’s happy return. Let us be merry once in a way.”

Stella saw her aunt close her eyes. What an expression of pain there was in the slow dropping of the eyelids! "Here, Madame Celia, take a glass of wine, it will do you more good than tea;" and the husband carried a glass of port wine to the wife.

"You know I hate port wine," said Celia, as she put it aside.

"It will do you good," he insisted.

"It is very strange," said Celia, her face suddenly growing like Mrs. Joddrell's, "that it is impossible to make some people believe that what they like another may not."

The Major laughed, and took his dismissal; but he attacked Stella. "Take a glass of wine, Miss Stella."

"I don't take wine, thank you, uncle."

"But you should, you know. Don't follow your aunt's example: she doesn't know what's good for her."

"Let the girl do as she likes," interfered Celia.

Major Dashwood drank off the wine himself, and then went and stood on the rug, his back to the fire. "I wish, Major D——," exclaimed Aunt Philly, "you would remember that we cannot see through you." One, two, three loud hems sounded as if Major Dashwood was clearing his throat for a speech, but nothing came of the hems.

For all the trials of his life—and, reader! never question the reality of what your neighbour calls trials—well, then, for all the trials of his life, Major Dashwood had found in *The Times* a panacea. He now subsided into an easy-chair with that day's paper. To spell through every column was the business of his life; though when asked if there were any news, any article of interest, his invariable answer, till very lately, had been "Nothing particular." To watch the military obituary was his serious occupation, his anxiety for deaths most disinterested. Just at this period, however, the increase of public excitement as to the slaves in the British colonies affected him too personally not to make some impression on his memory. "Did you see this morning's leading article on the West Indies?" asked the Major of his wife; "we shall have emancipation before we know where we are."

"And quite right, too," exclaimed Aunt Philly, hotly adding: "Blacks are bad enough any way, that I know to my own cost; but slaves! goodness gracious! it makes me sick to think of born christians being waited on by creatures with iron chains round their legs."

"But that is an entire mistake, ma'am," said Celia. "I assure you, I believe my brother's negroes are better treated, and have far less to do, than your English servants."

"Nonsense, niece! I believe my own eyes—ay, open yours as wide as you please—I believe my own eyes." Celia shrugged her shoulders, and again leaned back in her corner of the sofa. "Ah, ah! you can't deny it, you see. Niggers well-treated! Have a hot kitchen dinner every day, I suppose? I haven't looked over your Jamaica papers for nothing. Ain't the greatest half of them covered with disgraceful pictures of black Apollos and Venuses, and what not! and don't they have scars here and scars there as marks, and chains into the bargain? Don't tell me!"

"Those are the runaway slaves," said Celia.

"I wonder they don't all run away. I wish, nephew, you could read quietly, like other people," and Aunt Philly turned sharply on the Major; "that 'whish!' 'whish!' wears one's nerves to a fiddle-string." The sound so reprobated was a way Major Dashwood had of making known his dislike to any subject under discussion.

When old Pompey was removing the tea-things, Major Dashwood once more took up his forbidden position on the hearth-rug. "Prices of coffee lower every day. I don't believe your brother will nett half the income he did last year. I'll be bound he won't make his clear two thousand." The Major pronounced "two thousand," as if the sum were one which was quite habitually in his pocket.

"In my father's time Cedar Valley never gave less than five thousand a year," said Celia, plaintively.

"Monstrous!" said Aunt Philly. "Time such iniquities should cease."

"I don't see why one man is to be injured that another may be benefited, aunt," retorted the Major.

"Oh! for heaven's sake, do let us drop this odious subject," cries Celia. "If we talk till Doomsday, we shall never alter the case."

"That's just your way," said the Major; "always stopping a man's mouth when he has got something to say. I declare it is abominable, it is."

Mrs. Dashwood suddenly rose from the sofa, saying—"I hate arguments at all times, and I do think the very evening of my coming home, after such painful scenes as I have gone through, I might have been spared a subject known to be dis-

agreeable to me, and one that always forces me to hear innuendoes against my family." Celia made Aunt Philly a curtsey, and walked out of the room, followed by Stella.

Her tirade was rather strained, and her manner tragicomic; still it made its impression on aunt Philly, who, privately, was very proud of her nephew's pretty, accomplished wife. The Major returned to his newspaper and arm-chair. So ill-assorted, so without sympathy the one with the other, how had this trio come together? The answer is, "Circumstances;" and the same answer will explain many of those unions, intimacies, and situations which provoke the question of how they ever came to exist or subsist. Who knows, when he rises in the morning, what his actions are to be during the day? The state of the atmosphere, a cloud charged with electricity that delays, a clear sky that induces, a visit, some unexpected meeting, and the face of our lives is changed without our consciousness. We trust, we hope, we pray, we try to conjure the future to give us happiness; there is something more to invoke. Submission must play its part towards the inevitable suffering of life. Common sense, reflection, experience, faith, how can they save us? There is no omniscience belonging to the one or the other.



CHAP. V.—PORTRAITS.

THE garden overlooked by Mrs. Dashwood's bedroom balcony lay fresh and lovely in the autumn sunlight next morning. Four or five tall cedars, their majestic heads seeming to repose on the blue sky, marked the limits of the ground belonging to Waterloo Cottage. There was a man mowing the lawn: and the busy sharpening of his scythe was of that peculiar rural sound, suggestive of green pastures, with milky kine and rosy milkmaids—in fact, of a sort of Arcadia. Trees, birds, flowers, the vocal and perfumed air, were more than sufficient to heave the bosom of the impressible Celia with pleasurable emotion. Last evening's discomfort was forgotten; even the impression left by the sad scenes at Evian lost its dark hue, as the healthy blood coursed rapidly through her veins, brightening her cheeks, lips, and eyes. As she stood in the verandah, eagerly breathing the sweet morning air, feeling that she loved life, vague projects of

hitherto unattempted well-doing, of being more worthily employed, played at hide-and-seek in her mind. Her eyes shone with her good intentions; and animated, blooming, with more the appearance of a girl of twenty than of a woman of thirty, she went to seek her young niece. She found Stella on her knees, saying her morning prayers. The girl was pale, depressed-looking. Her nature was composed of sturdier fibres than was that of her aunt. There was in Stella a force of resistance, equally opposed to sudden changes in herself or others, to external as well as internal sudden transformations. Still a child in knowledge, experience, and language, she was already a woman in serious feeling. Her moral powers had made a certain start forward during the past year, her grandmother's unexpected death developing the latent self-reliance of her character. Stella could not have put her meaning into explicit words; but she knew, with that quick consciousness given to very young girls as guiding instinct before reason is matured, that her dear pretty auntie would be no stay nor guide for her—that she had none of that rocky material in her composition against which she (Stella) could dash herself in her dark moments, and find support. The journey from Switzerland to England had taught her this.

The first exhibition of the domestic circle in which her aunt lived had painfully recalled many of her grandmother's conversations about this dear auntie: she could not stem this tide of thought, and it carried her on to the saddest of all meditations, whether for old or young—on the absence for her of all happy family ties. Curiously enough, the comforts of Waterloo Cottage, its carpets, screens, easy-chairs, and footstools, did not impress her happily. She looked back to the large, desolate house, and its nude floors, its nude walls, with longing; she had not been accustomed to the nattiness and luxury, the self-worship visible in every corner of the Dashwoods' home. She did not like it. In it there was none of the chivalrous contempt of creature comforts she had witnessed in her grandmother. Mrs. Joddrell had belonged to a race of giants, in opposition to whom pretty Celia, with her cushions, was very degenerate and commonplace. Stella's grave morning face disappointed Mrs. Dashwood. She had expected her niece to be astonished and charmed by the luxurious prettiness of the room appropriated to her. Celia having herself forgotten the evening's dissension, had no suspicion that it had sent Stella to bed, disheartened and

feeling homeless. Mirrors and lace toilette-covers have no powers to console that state of mind. The girl had in her ears still the many sounds of the beautiful lake, in her eyes still the pale stern face she should see no more: she prayed alone, and was aware of how much she missed her grandmother. Poor Perro, too, left behind with the Sister of San Joseph! Mrs. Dashwood took Stella to the drawing-room; the conservatory was on the one side, and what Mrs. Dashwood was pleased to call "her study" on the other. There was the expression of Celia's self on everything; an artistic harmony of colour and form. But the arrangements spoke more to the highly civilised denizen of great cities, than to a quasi-savage like Stella, who had yet to acquire the desire and need for luxury, before she could admire the means of gratification. Had she spoken her mind at that moment, it would have been to own that she should have preferred toasting her rolls before a wood fire, and flying to and fro between the kitchen and parlour, and bandying words with Rose, to the well-appointed table at which she was now going to breakfast. The only objects that brought a question from her lips were the pictures over the study mantel-piece. Those were not the days of stern-lined daguerreotypes, but of shadowy water-colours. The artist then in vogue, whatever one's defects, whether of outline, colouring, or expression, managed to produce a charming picture, and, every one allowed, also a capital likeness. It was possible to look at one's own portrait, without the dismal ejaculation of, "Am I really so frightful?" And that, too, in the days of frizzed curls, high heads, and gigot sleeves, with crinolines inside of them. Only think of sleeves with hoops! With the present fashion, quaint and fantastic as it is, what a portrait would net the artist have made of the lady in question!—that is, Mrs. Harriette Hood, the wife of Mr. Hood, the great ship-owner, and Mrs. Celia Dashwood's bosom friend.

Mrs. Hood lives about a quarter of a mile from Waterloo Cottage, on the Heath, in a fine mansion surrounded by fine grounds. She has carriages and horses, manifold men and maid servants, and some few children also, with whom, as she never troubles her friends, it will be useless to vex the reader. Mrs. Hood, quite unintentionally on her part, gets mixed up with Stella's history—she is the unconscious stick that beats the pig, and brings matters to a conclusion satisfactory to all probably but the said pig. Harriette Hood has not yet quite

reached the famous half-way of life—thirty-five years; of an evening, when in good humour, she looks younger. Her face is not handsome, but full of character: you cannot pass her unobserved, for she has that something about her, and in her, which forcibly arrests the attention. Her brow is broad, and not too high; her eyes, deep-set, not constantly bright nor yet melancholy, serve faithfully to reveal every motion of her soul. Her nose singularly Saxon, not pretty, but with a wide, sensible bridge. The mouth well curved, not such a common beauty as a fine complexion among the natives of the Fortunate Islands. It was when she laughed that this Mrs. Harriette Hood was pretty. Her jaw was too solid, her shoulders too broad for classical outlines. Nevertheless she was an attractive woman. She was accustomed honestly to regret her own want of beauty, not as a bait for inane, insincere compliments. A Mr. Stapylton Smyth once replied to her: "Very lucky you have not *that* into the bargain; otherwise you would upset the world." Celia had added: "I don't know any one I would so little wish for a rival as you, Harriette."

"Nonsense!" says Harriette; "at my age and with my plainness—agreeable plainness if you please,—but still plainness."

"Oh, Harriette! if yours is plainness, it is better than other people's beauty." Has the reader a clear idea of Mrs. Hood?

In the picture she wore bright crimson ribbons to fasten the drapery of her dress, and bows of the same in her hair (*blond cendré*), of which she had a great profusion. Mrs. Hood could wear crimson with as much good effect as any French or Italian woman. There was a romantic friendship between Mrs. Harriette and Mrs. Celia, which thus originated. Mrs. Hood adored beauty in woman as much as if she had been a man. Impossible for her to have kindly feelings for any plain one of her sex; she would not have them in her house or at her table, but under vigorous protestation, or as a bribe or reward to her husband. Mr. Hood, be it said, was a tall, well-figured, well-looking man; according to some, because he had large, placid, blue eyes, and a great talent for silence, he was a benevolent person; others, who pretended to shrewdness themselves, affirmed he was a sharp, hard man, addicted to sarcasm, and habitually laughing in his sleeve at his wife and her society. His wife spoke approvingly of him, and when her mother-in-law or her sisters-in-law reported to her the suppositions relating to her, currently cherished in her school for scandal, Mrs. Harriette would answer, "she should

be a fool, which she was not, to prefer any one to Mr. Hood: he suited her exactly." Celia, like a "Keepsake"—as a French gentleman speaking English had described her—was met by Mrs. Hood in some Hampstead artistic or musical meeting; and, struck by Celia's loveliness, she had been introduced, and immediately vowed herself to this new fancy. A torrent of visits ensued. Mrs. Hood drove out Mrs. Dashwood—Major and Mrs. Dashwood must dine to-day, to-morrow, with the Hoods—morning, noon, and night, pages and grooms were conveying and re-conveying tiny notes.

"You admire my Harriette, don't you, Stella?" asked Celia, fondly wiping off a speck on the glass of the picture.

"No; it is not a nice face."

"But you will not be able to help admiring her when you see her. She is one of the persons a picture never does justice to; you may not think much of her at first, but she is one who throws every one else into the shade, I assure you, when once you come to know her."

"I like *this* face," said Stella, pointing to another picture.

"Of course you know who that is?"

Stella shook her head. "How should I, auntie?" They were standing before the half-length of a youth; also by the artist then in vogue. The face was finely formed, the chin rather long, giving the head a resemblance to the portraits of the men of Shakspeare's time. The complexion was pale, of an opaque white—glorious, thoughtful, dark hazel eyes—all the limner's skill had been called into action to do justice to those eyes. As for the rest of the features, they were good and in keeping; perhaps, too clearly cut to be considered as belonging to an English type; doubtless the original of the portrait had southern blood in his veins. There were signs of intellect enough and to spare, but the crowning merit of the countenance consisted in this: you could not trace a line in it indicative of anything petty—of any lurking vanity—yet you would not term it exactly an open or frank face—you could imagine rather its present calm vanished, replaced by a profound melancholy, or the eyes flashing with angry, lurid light. "Don't you guess who that is, Stella?" reiterated Mrs. Dashwood.

"Not papa? Oh, now I know: it is cousin Louis."

"Yes; it is cousin Louis, as you call him—what he was at twenty, when he was an Edinburgh student. Who can tell what the slave-driver is like? I dare say nearly as black as

one of his own negroes—a perfect rum-and-water savage.” Celia spoke in a harsh voice.

“He does not look like a bad boy,” said Stella, “yet grand-mamma quite hated him. She called him selfish, and all sorts of bad names.”

“She was fond enough of him once,” replied Celia, “but he disappointed her sorely. In her secret soul, my poor mother despised every profession but that of the army or navy. Louis refused a cadetship to India, all to go back to that horrid Silver Hill of his.”

“But papa went back to Jamaica,” objected Stella.

“He was very differently situated. He could keep as many overseers and book-keepers to do his dirty work as he chose. Your papa had town-house, country-house, mountain-house. He is the *custos rotulorum* of his parish, styled the Honourable George Joddrell; he is in the House of Assembly, while Louis cannot even have a book-keeper, but must look after his property himself, nothing better than a negro-driver.”

“Why would he not have the cadetship?”

“Some overstrained notion that he owed it to his mother to go back to her, as she was a widow, and he was her only child.”

“Do you think he would have liked better to have gone to the East Indies?”

Celia hesitated. “I am not sure. I don’t know. I remember when he and mamma quarrelled about it, his saying, as it was a choice of blacks, he preferred his own. That is a likeness of his mother when she was seventeen.” Mrs. Dashwood pointed to a small miniature of a girl in white muslin, blue sash, and powdered hair.

“I cannot make out any face: it’s all dots,” said Stella.

“Well, she is rather a weak, washed-out person in reality, so I have been told, at least; but, poor thing,” went on Celia, “her life has been a very sad one. Really, some people’s lives seem riveted and iron-clasped into them. What that little woman has suffered would suffice to kill a dozen Hercules. Her father cursed her for marrying Mr. Gautier, who did not turn out the best of husbands. She lost child after child, and at last Mr. Gautier was killed by a fall from his mule, three months before Louis’s birth, leaving her little beside a legacy of debts.”

“I think Louis was quite right to go back to her,” said Stella, with great warmth and decision.

"There are two sides to every question, Miss Enthusiast, but Louis never did see but one, he will always be one-sided. Mamma had a right to be considered as well as his mother. She had saved them from having Silver Hill taken from them after Mr. Gautier's death, getting my father to take up the mortgage. Mamma paid out of her own purse for Louis's education; he was sent to the same school where your father had been educated, he lived in our house when mamma came to England, just as if he had been her son. His mother had done without him for twelve years, she could have gone on without him for twelve more; they knew nothing of one another; there's no softness in Louis—yes, he was ungrateful."

Stella heard such an irritation in her aunt's voice, that she remained silent for a minute; but her curiosity about all her relations made her venture on one more question: "Are the Gautiers very poor still?"

"They can't be rich, because their property is small; but they have managed somehow to clear it of all debt."

"I am very glad; he cannot be a bad man," said Stella.

"Proud as Lucifer, son of the morning," laughed Celia.

There was a black silhouette on the mantel-piece, which was not Major Dashwood. Stella took it in her hand, asking—"Is this papa?"

"No, indeed," said Celia. "Your papa cannot boast of such a classical profile. Poor brother George, he is a regular bluff, round-featured, square-made John Bull, but he was a pretty boy—there's his picture behind you." A commonplace oil-painting represented Stella's father as a boy of fifteen in his first coat.

"That black thing," explained Celia, "is a Mr. Smythe, whom you will see some day."

At breakfast-time the general post brought Mrs. Dashwood a letter from Mrs. Hood, dated Brighton, a closely-written and crossed epistle. It began—"Celina, Nina, darling;" it ended—"I embrace you in the spirit till I can do so in the body; the gods alone know when that will be, for Hood has taken an obstinate fit about the sea air being necessary for the children. *Nota bene*: they are all in a plethora of good health. S. S. is here, airing his handsome self on the Steyne, and pretending he cares not for men, nor women either, when all the while he would commit suicide if he believed himself unnoticed. He says it is quite unnatural to see me without you, and that he does not like his scoldings half so well given

in my amazonian tones, as when your dove-like coo mingles therewith. I suppose, as you have just flown back to the nest, I must not do so desperate a deed as to ask you to come to me here, and yet we shall not move for another six weeks, I know. What are you going to do with the niece? Do not keep her with you—she'll be horridly in our way. *Be on your guard.* Miss Philly will be on the look-out for bringing a little money into the family by the girl's board. Send Miss Stella to Mrs. Tait's, or I'll never forgive you."

Celia re-folded the letter in a musing manner; it had set her powerful imagination in motion, and she already foresaw, with flashing lucidity, a terrific interference with what was the happiness of her life. Celia was always under some dominant influence. She was a susceptible, clinging creature, all over tendrils that adhered, but did not twine round and round a chosen support, or force a passage into the very core, and become with it one and indivisible. There was no heart-breaking wrench, when wrench there came; she drooped only till she could again attach herself. But she had this peculiarity—once detached, it was for ever. She was actually shuddering at the breakfast-table at visions of the sacrifice of a society all in all to her at the present time. Celia could never judge of a position. She rushed to an extreme immediately. "To be horridly in the way" was tantamount "to being for ever separated from Harriette" by a Gorgon in Stella's shape. Aunt Philly and Major Dashwood were conspiring to dig a pitfall into which they meant her to fall. This was the twenty-ninth of September; Jamaica packet-day was close at hand. She would write to brother George, and get the business off her mind. She would ask him what he wished to be done with his daughter, as—oh! Jesuitical Celia—the want of a house of her own precluded her proposing to take charge of his dear girl, until her education should be completed. He knew by this time of their late lamented mother's wish that Stella should return to him as soon as possible. All that she (Celia) had it in her power to offer, was to keep Stella with her until she received her dear brother's directions.

Celia felt very treacherous towards her confiding, loving niece. She knew that the idea of going to a school had never come into the poor girl's head. Celia was self-condemned, too; for the cruel hint thrown out in her letter, of sending Stella, with a woman's growth and a woman's sensitive feelings, to be penned up with a parcel of thoughtless children,

certain to make a mockery of her want of the glittering erudition indigenous to all establishments for young ladies. But not for self-condemnation did the pretty aunt hesitate; Harriette told her to be on her guard, and she was on her guard. By the same mail Stella wrote to her father; she stated her deficiencies broadly, and required rather than petitioned Mr. Joddrell to grant her the means of having the best masters.—“I have cost you little hitherto, dear papa,” so she wrote. “You know that poor grandmamma gave me no means of learning what young ladies learn. I suppose you left me with her so long that I might take care of her, as neither you nor auntie could do so, but now let me make up for lost time. I am your only child, so I am sure you can afford it. I want a piano-master, and a singing-master. I want to learn drawing, dancing, and Italian. French I know, and I should like to have riding lessons. You must make out a list of all I may do, that dear auntie may not be worried, and write by the very next packet and say how long it will be before I go to Jamaica. I am much taller than auntie, and we hope I shall not grow any more; and I am, dearest papa, your affectionate child, STELLA PEPITA JODDRELL.”



CHAP. VI.—MISTRESS AND PUPIL.

HER letter to Mr. Joddrell was gone; Celia “had got it off her mind:” the expression was a common one of Mrs. Dashwood’s, and felicitously rendered her feeling. Whatever the subject, she could and did dismiss it from her thoughts as soon as she had taken any step towards its solution. During the six weeks before Mrs. Hood’s return to Hampstead, Stella was very happy. Celia petted her; Mrs. Joddrell had described it as Celia’s way. Nor, with all her impatience after what young ladies learn, did Stella show any impatience under her present deprivation of Italian, or the piano, or dancing. For the first time in her life, the young lady had it in her power to read a romance. She sat in the study day after day, dead to this world, alive only to that in which the heroes and heroines of Walter Scott moved and had their being. Her dumb faculties were being unlocked, the eyes of her soul unsealed; the haze over her thoughts being lifted

away, the miracle of light was taking place for her. There was none by to mark her. All the morning Celia was engrossed by her maid or her letters. Aunt Philly was in her store-room ; the Major shut up with his newspaper. For a wonder, these three persons had a unanimous opinion ; they all described Stella as the very best and least troublesome girl in the world. They left her to stillness and solitude ; she had a book in her hand, therefore she was out of mischief. In stillness and solitude her imagination worked, probing the emotions she read of. Girl-like, she clothed with flesh and blood the enchanter's offspring. Seated opposite to Celia's picture, her favourite heroes, every one of them, took the features of cousin Louis. Leicester and those resembling him were like the black silhouette ; the ladies, such as excited her indignation, assumed the semblance of Mrs. Hood ; Amy Robsart, Rowena, and Lucy Ashton were her aunt ; Flora McIvor and Rebecca, the dark-haired and dark-eyed, the devoted, the unhappy—she blushed at doing so, but she could not help identifying them with herself.

The day Stella had finished the *Bride of Lammermuir*, she craved for some sympathy. She had almost wept the eyes out of her head. The first time she found her aunt alone she began, plunging into her subject abruptly, as her wont was—"Auntie *do* you think that there is really love like Lucy Ashton's and Ravenswood's in the world, now?" Mrs. Dashwood had a recollection that, in her young days, it used to be considered highly indecorous to talk of love before girls, that mammas and aunts were accustomed to whisper among themselves of the existence of such a thing, or insinuate it by dreadful wry faces. This was the first time Celia had been called on to act the maternal character ; so she bridled up a little, and answered Stella's question diplomatically by asking another—"Why otherwise are there marriages?"

"But love like *that*?" persisted Stella.

Mrs. Dashwood became Celia again ; laughed, blushed, and, with a shake of her long curls, answered:—"I don't know."

A silence of a minute or two, and then Stella went on:—"I can understand loving one's parents, and brothers, and friends—doing like Flora. I should have quite despised her had she married Waverley." Stella was leaning towards her aunt, her great dusky eyes full of anxious meaning: "I wonder if I ever shall! Does everybody?"

"No ; I believe not—at least so I have read," replied the puzzled matron.

"Did you, auntie—ever?" This interrogation was spoken in a very low, hesitating voice.

"What a question, child ! do you expect me to answer it?"

"Why should you be ashamed?"

"Stella, you are a goose—talking of these sort of things is like talking of one's religious feelings."

Stella considered for an instant ; looked perplexed, as if the knot of her thoughts was beyond her power to unloose ; first she uttered some broken words, then, as if she had caught the right end of the thread, she added, with gravity—"We ought not to be ashamed of confessing we love God and our Lord ; you know we are told, 'He will be ashamed of us if we are.'"

"Now, Stella, my child, this is what I cannot endure, mixing up sacred and profane subjects. Love like that mentioned in the Gospel has nothing to do with, and ought NEVER to be coupled with, that other one."

"Must it not?" asked Stella ; and here the conversation ended.

Mrs. Dashwood's uneasiness at the new phase of thought into which she saw her niece had entered, was not little. As the only person with authority over Stella, she felt herself called upon to do something in the way of checking, encouraging, or directing her to some good purpose ; and, at the same time, Celia had the consciousness of not being quite clear about the course that was best to pursue. This consciousness was the spur that made her send Stella to practise the piano a couple of hours every morning, and afterwards call her to read aloud Russell's *Modern Europe*. Celia was working a regal pair of slippers for Mrs. Hood, and was well amused finding her place in the pattern, and matching her colours ; but for poor Stella the change from Walter Scott was very dreary. For a few days Celia kept up this sort of surveillance, and during this time she opened her mother's desk ; she had never yet had courage to do so. The sight of the familiar objects, some of her own child's story-books—her own first glove, her own first copy-book, a lock of her hair when she was a baby, when a girl, and the long ringlet severed on the eve of her wedding-day ; some trifling presents she had made to her mother, labelled, "From my precious Celia ;" the miniature, with the glass dimmed

perhaps by the very tear that Stella had seen roll on it from the stern eyes : one and all of the relics troubled the heart, and shook the fragile frame, of the daughter. The secret of Mrs. Joddrell's penurious economy came to light. In one drawer were two small packets; on the one was written: "For my funeral expenses;" on the other, "For my dear only daughter, from her ever affectionate mother." Each parcel contained money: a large sum had been saved for Celia. Celia threw herself on Stella's neck. "I wish I had never done as I did. I wish I had never married. Oh! how I wish she were alive, I would bear with all—I would never cross her! Oh! why—why did I ever leave her?—what love is like hers?—I shall never be happy again. Mamma! mamma! take me to you." She clenched her hands, threw her head back till her whole face was turned to the sky with upbraiding, pleading looks. "No time was given me to make her know that I did love her better than any one; and now who is to comfort me and take this dreadful, dreadful pain from me!"

Stella held her aunt in her arms and answered her:—"It was only because you were married grandmamma was angry with you. She said you never gave her half the trouble that I did, and that it was uncle and Miss Dashwood made you do what you did. She never blamed you, auntie, and you saw how comforted she was when you came." Celia sobbed on; but the heavy tide of feeling was already on the turn. "Do you remember grandmamma's eyes?" went on Stella; "how they looked like a dove's after you arrived. She was not angry with *you* a bit—poor auntie, don't cry so! I don't think if you had done ever so, you could have helped grandmamma's being unhappy."

Celia turned her blue eyes like violets wet with dew on her little friend; she resembled a repentant child rather than a sorrowing, remorseful woman. This extremely youthful appearance always did serve as an apology for Celia's extremely unformed character. To expect firmness or lasting impressions from such a tender plant, would have seemed nothing less than absurd. Her emotions were acute, but fleeting; they were fast ebbing even now, and with a vehement impatience of suffering, she exclaimed, in answer to Stella's assurances, "I hope so; you do not say this only to comfort me, do you, Stella? When poor mamma was alive, it never came into my head that I was behaving so, that it would be downright tor-

ture to me when she was dead. Every one said I was right not to stay with her, that being married it was not my duty; and now I feel as if I would give anything if I had never left her, but borne with her; I even wonder I ever thought her wrong and tyrannical. I often wake in the night and see her as I did the day I arrived at Evian, and I dream of her taking me to parties." The sweet blue eyes once more overflowed.

"Grandmamma said she was not at all jealous," replied Stella, in her strong, truthful way; "but she was; the reason she was never pleased with you, was because of uncle. She never really thought you were wrong: when you were at a distance, she wouldn't allow that any one could be equal to you."

"Did you love your grandmamma, Stella?"

"Yes, while I was a little child I loved her dearly; she was very good to me then, but latterly she was bitter, and I was bitter, and she reproached me with my Spanish blood, and that was like speaking ill of my mother—it made me feel revengeful. It is very hard to be really good, auntie."

Celia did not answer, she was handling some of the rings and brooches packed in the desk. "I want you to have some of these gewgaws, Stella."

"No, I thank you, auntie; grandmamma didn't mean that I should. She trusted to me that I would take care you should have them all."

"But if they are mine, I may give some of them to you."

"No; there are packets for papa. See—even one for Louis, with a lock of her soft gray hair; my name is nowhere; I won't have anything." Celia saw Stella was in earnest, and did not press her offer.

"Auntie," began Stella again, "I believe there is something disagreeable for me to know about myself. Will you tell me what it is?"

"My dear Stella, your poor mamma is dead and——"

"Stop a minute, dear auntie, and just hear me: there is something wrong. I am sure of it now. I *must* know it some day, and I would not like to ask papa. He is not ashamed of my being born, is he?"

"No,—no! it is not that."

"What is it, then?"

"I wish I knew whether it would be right to tell you," hesitated Celia.

"Pray, pray do, dear auntie!" persisted Stella.

"You never knew your mother's maiden name, did you?" began Celia.

Stella, surprised, answered, "Yes: Josepha or Pepita Gautier."

Celia shook her head. "No; she had nothing whatever to do with the Gautiers. The story, as far as I know it, is this. At the time when Louis's father escaped from the massacre of St. Domingo, he saved the life of an unknown Spanish woman and her two little daughters, one quite a baby, and paid for their passage, in the same ship with himself, to Jamaica. The woman turned out to be Loaysa Perez, a famous rope-dancer; and it was the eldest of those children saved by Mr. Gautier, who afterwards became my brother's wife and your mother. Mr. Gautier, very shortly after arriving in Jamaica, bought Silver Hill, the next plantation to my father's, fell desperately in love with my mother's sister, and married her too, in spite of every one. It was just about the same time that the Perez, finding little encouragement in Kingston, was going to Spain. The child Pepita had attached herself in a most extraordinary manner to Mr. Gautier; and he persuaded his bride to adopt her. Of course when George went to take possession of Cedar Valley, he became acquainted with her. We none of us knew of his marriage till you appeared; and an awful explosion there was, I assure you."

"And what became of the others, auntie?"

"Senora Perez, the mother, died years ago. Her youngest daughter was a rope-dancer also. I believe she was very famous. I have an idea I once saw her at Vauxhall floating about in the middle of fire-work."

"Then, that is what grandmamma meant by saying, she could tell me something that would take the pride out of me."

"Ah, poor mamma! George's marriage was an awful blow to her."

"And is this all you can tell me, auntie?"

"Very little more, Stella. When your father went back to Jamaica, after leaving you in England, to his horror and astonishment he found a Madame Olympia, who said she was your mother's sister, domiciled at Silver Hill. I believe the old Senora Perez had written a letter before she died to Aunt Gautier, begging her to be kind to her daughter, who had made some bad marriage. George has never told me any particulars; he said it was a ridiculous, romantic business, with which he would have nothing to do."

"And is she at Silver Hill now?"

"Oh! dear, yes: the Gautiers, mother and son, make an idol of her."

"And what is her other name besides Olympia?"

"Heaven knows! I don't; and remember, Stella, we *none* of us ever speak of her; there is no necessity: *Il faut l'aver son linge sale en famille.*"

"She could not help being a rope-dancer," said Stella.

"I don't say she could, but let each rank keep its own sphere," said Celia, colouring, and speaking angrily.

Stella's face was hidden in a sofa cushion, but there was a motion of the shoulders that showed she was weeping. "Do not cry or you'll make me regret that I ever told you," said Celia; "and for Heaven's sake never say anything about being half Spanish, otherwise the whole story will be ferreted out, and there will be no end of gossip."

"We are a very unfortunate family," observed Stella; her former set of ideas reviving; "I wonder if we *are* under a punishment."

"What for?" asked Celia.

"Suppose it should be for having slaves?"

"There's no harm in that, Stella; the custom of possessing slaves is mentioned both in the Old and New Testaments. It's an institution like any other. The Romans had even white slaves. We were allowed to have them by the laws of this country. Don't let Aunt Philly make you a blue light, my dear child."

"Pompey is free?"

"Of course, the moment he touched English soil he became free."

"There cannot be two right ways, auntie; one for England, and just the contrary for Jamaica."

"I think as my parents thought," returned Celia; "I am sure they were as good as most people—far better than these saints, who are so generous with other people's property. I advise you not to talk in that way to your father."

Celia was not calculated to guide the young; everything became a personal matter with her. She could not express dissent or put forth advice with the calm of a superior who disinterestedly finds fault with an inferior; there was a passionate tone and look that always brought her down to the level of the one she was instructing. Stella valiantly withheld her tongue from further discussion. She would not tease

poor auntie; and again on going to bed she thought, "how hard it is to be really good." Stella was thinking solely of her own defects, pretty auntie was not to be judged. The girl had avoided arguing; yes, but nevertheless, that youngest member of a family, dependent on slave labour, and brought up in its reverence, lay down to rest that night with her young heart overshadowed by the dread that her kindred were under a curse for its sake.

Are there Divine revelations now-a-days? Surely not. The fact was, one of the great epochs of English History was at hand. The public conscience was crying aloud to be relieved from a burden it found intolerable. Society was positively tumultuous with petitions for the freedom of the blacks. The cry against slavery was in every mouth. Pictures of men in chains, more terrible than those quoted by aunt Philly, met every eye. The men appointed to overcome the monstrous evil had appeared, and were bearing down the passionate resistance of the West Indians, with the resistless force of a national agitation. Tens of thousands of unconscious missionaries, as is always the case when a question is ripe for solution, were busy pushing round the wheel of the Propaganda of Emancipation; none more zealously or unconsciously than aunt Philly, through whose bigoted and prejudiced notions on the matter, Stella was notwithstanding contriving to arrive at a tolerably sound and just estimate of the great wrong existing, and of the great redress it demanded.

CHAP. VII.—A FIRST PARTY.

WITH November came Mrs. Hood; she walked from her house to Waterloo Cottage, and opening the drawing-room like one at home, found *her* Celia giving Stella a music lesson. Size is always imposing, and Mrs. Hood had, beside that attribute peculiar to ladies denominated "stylish," of taking up more room than any other of her sex present, the faculty also of making every woman she met feel herself ill-dressed. Stella rose from the piano, waiting while the two ladies embraced, but finding herself unnoticed she slipped away. "Did I not warn you what would be the case?" said Mrs. Hood, reproachfully.

"It's only till I hear from George," was Mrs. Dashwood's

humble reply: "really I had not the heart to leave the girl to herself; she was getting into mischief."

"If she were, you are not the one, my dear child, to keep her out of it. You ought never to trust to your own judgment in such things, Celia. Don't you see you have been making a case against yourself by playing governess at all? I foresee how it will end."

"I am not so soft as you think," returned Celia, with a flush on her cheek; "I can be firm enough when I choose."

"Well, show your spirit now by giving up to-day entirely to me without asking any one's leave, and then we can trace out the plan of a campaign for you. Let the girl alone; if she has good dispositions she'll be good, and if she hasn't she won't—you can't change nature. One of my girls is an angel, and the other is—hem! and yet they are the children of the same parents."

Celia's doubts and qualms of responsibility vanished before her friend's sunny presence. Old habits of gossip and intimacy were renewed. Stella was left once again to her heroes and heroines; the number increased by those of the *Corsair* and *Lara*. How she did devour these poems! All the rest of one day, after finishing *Lara*, she went about the house in the same state of uneasy excitement that she would have felt had she been an eye-witness to some tragical occurrence. A walk with Major Dashwood, in the forenoon, on the heath, enjoined by Celia—and backgammon in the evening, imposed by aunt Philly, were the stern realities of Stella's life. A batch of elderly ladies called, at regular intervals, on Miss Dashwood; and the clergyman's wife, the doctor's wife, and the widow of the colonel of Major Dashwood's regiment, appeared at the cottage from time to time. But Celia was far too careless, and at the same time too exclusive, to keep up any regular round of visiting. Mrs. Hood had been a month at home when she said to Celia, "Hood has met your niece with Major Dashwood two or three times on the heath, and he is in one of his obstinate fits. He insists on the propriety of my inviting Miss Stella to come sometimes with you to our house. He has no idea—no man ever has—what a restraint a girl of that age is."

"Tell him, though she is so tall, she is not old enough to go to grown-up parties," said Celia.

"What would be the use of telling him? Two days after he would begin again, just as if one had never said a word on

the subject! No, no! Bring the girl, and let us be done with it. If he sees her once, he'll be quiet. I'll ask the Bury girls, and then they can dance."

Stella had never been to a party in her life; her ideas on this point, drawn from her daily reading, were very magnificent. The evening fixed for her going to the Hoods' found her full of wondering, dreadful expectation. Her heart beat fast as the carriage stopped before the broad flight of stone steps which led up to the great door of the mansion. Powdered footmen in gay liveries astonished her. She took the butler for a gentleman, and immediately after mistook Mr. Hood for the butler. Their dress, indeed, was identical. Like master, like man.

Mrs. Hood met the Dashwoods at the drawing-room door, and after a few brief words of welcome, she carried off Stella to a sofa on which sat two young ladies. "Make room for my young friend between you, dears; Miss Joddrell, Isabel and Adela Bury. Now you are to be charmed with one another;" and away went Mrs. Hood.

Hitherto Stella had kept her large eyelids over her eyes; she now began to glance shyly from side to side. How pretty all the ladies are! like pictures! The sisters, Isabel and Adela, with their long brown curls, their white muslins and blue ribbons, so dazzled her, that for one instant she anxiously sought to see Mrs. Dashwood, to make sure that pretty auntie was not outshone. There were so many nymphs grouped about, or darting, half merrily half timidly, across the room, that she could not at once distinguish Celia. Unconscious in her eagerness, she rose from her seat, thus herself attracting the notice of several persons. One gentleman actually started as he caught sight of her. "Who is that?" asked Mr. Smythe, the "S. S." of Mrs. Hood's letter, touching that lady on the arm, and motioning with his head in Stella's direction.

"Do you mean the girl in black between the Burys?" He nodded assent. "That's only Celia's niece, a Miss Joddrell. What a way of dressing!" and Mrs. Hood put up her lip.

Mr. Smyth turned his gaze from Stella to Mrs. Hood, letting a half satirical smile appear on his face. "It does not much matter how she's dressed, she is the handsomest girl in the room."

"Of course: *belle de sa laideur*." And the lady laughed.

"I wonder at *you*," returned S. S., "for you *can* judge of another woman's beauty."

"I must confess, that in this case I only see a gawky girl with large eyes," said the lady.

"Ah! what eyes! examine their shape; and then the lashes: I never before saw an Englishwoman with such long thick eyelashes."

"They must be like horsehair, if you can see them from this distance," observed Mrs. Hood.

"It is the shade they throw on her cheek, which reveals them to me."

"You had better reveal to Celia the beauties of her niece and exhort her to make the girl look a little more like other people."

"What do you find fault with?" asked Mr. Smythe; "her dress, not too high nor too low, seems to me very maidenly and appropriate; and now I think of it, it has the very cut chosen by Raffaele and Leonardo for their ideal women."

"And you approve of the way her hair is strained off her forehead, as if she were going to wash her face! you admire that, too, don't you?"

"A trick to show her beautiful ear; but I assure you, those heavy plaits are very Grecian."

Mrs. Hood, with a slight toss of her frizzed head, left him. Dancing began, and Stella's neighbours were led off by partners. She was looking on with curiosity, pleasure, and longing, when she was startled by a gentleman asking her to dance. "Thank you, sir, but I have never learned to dance," answered Stella, with a stern promptitude amazingly diverting to Mr. Smythe.

"Why, what have you been doing all your life?" he said, smiling, as he seated himself by her side.

The smile and voice were of rare sweetness. Mr. Smythe was a tall thin man, broad of shoulder, with the stoop of delicate health. His forehead was high, shaded with clustering light brown curls. He had blue eyes, well opened, but rather sunk in his head, an aquiline nose, and a beautiful mouth. He would have been a remarkably handsome man, both as regards figure and face, had he been healthy. As it was, at first, you could only see the traces of what he might have been; but once accustomed to his invalid appearance, women in particular pronounced him handsome. With something of his own half-jesting half-earnest manner, the girl replied—"Nothing but growing up, I believe." "You can

read, I hope?" studying the already firm intellectual lines of her face. This time she smiled, and again Mr. Smythe felt the same wonder as to who she was. A silence ensued, Stella watching the dancing, her foot keeping time to the music; Mr. Smythe earnestly yet furtively examining her features.

"Would you like to go nearer to the dancers? See how your aunt and Mrs. Hood are watching us." Stella looked towards the pair of ladies, perfectly unembarrassed, as she got up from the sofa. "Won't you take my arm?" continued Mr. Smythe; "it is quite proper to do so, I assure you." Stella put her hand on his offered arm, saying—"I have never been to a party before."

"Where could you have been living, to escape parties?"

"With my grandmamma, at a little town called Evian," replied the literal Stella.

"Then you know French: *Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte*. I shall soon not be able to distinguish you from the Miss Burys, or any other belles. You will be surprised to find how easy it is to acquire their airs and graces."

"But I shall not be going to parties for a long while. After Christmas I am to begin having lessons."

"Nonsense!" looking astonished.

"It is dreadful, isn't it, at my age to be so far back in everything?" Stella's was real simplicity. Mr. Smythe's long experience allowed him at once to decide between the real and the imitation.

"Certainly you are very tall for a school-room," he replied.

"I suppose I must not ask how old you are?"

"Oh, yes, you may. I was sixteen last month."

Mr. Smythe thought, "What a pity to teach you to be anything but what you are!" but he said aloud—"I should say Mrs. Hood has designs on one of us. See how she is sailing, through the confusion, directly down upon us. Can you sing or play? You say no! Very well: shall we run away from her?"

"If you like," replied Stella, briskly.

Mr. Smythe laughed. "You do not admire Mrs. Hood, I perceive."

Stella answered—"No; she is out of proportion."

"Better and better," thought Mr. Smythe. "So, Miss Joddrell, you are an artist." Stella gave a little shake of the head. "I mean you have a turn for drawing."

"I cannot tell yet; but I am going to learn."

Mrs. Hood was now standing in front of Mr. Smythe, steadily regarding him with hard, unwinking eyes; however, her tone was courteous enough as she said—"Will you sing something while the Bury girls are getting back their breath?"

"I am always at your command, fair lady."

"Come at once then;" adding, without looking at Stella, as she took hold of Mr. Smythe's disengaged arm, "Miss Joddrell will excuse you."

Stella understood very well that Mrs. Hood wanted her away, but she hesitated at the idea of being left alone in the middle of the large room. She looked round for her aunt, involuntarily tightening her hold on Mr. Smythe's left arm. As the trio were advancing towards the piano, Mrs. Hood said, in a fierce whisper—"I didn't know your taste before; you had better go to the nursery the next time you come here."

Stella espied a quiet seat in the corner, and letting go her hold of Mr. Smythe, went and installed herself there. Mr. Smythe's singing was very imperfect; no one would ever have dreamed of comparing him with Rubini, the Mario of those far-away days, yet Mr. Smythe had a voice that penetrated to your heart; he had notes that made you feel cold from head to foot. He sang, one after the other, several ballads—Italian, Spanish, even Romaic; picked up, this last, from Greek boatmen. Mr. Smythe had been all over Europe, if not over Asia and Africa, for he was a member of a club where only men who had seen the Great Desert could be admitted; and all the while he sang he watched Stella flushing and turning white, and her serious eyes suddenly soften and glisten. When he left the piano, he did not seek Stella again; he did not intend to quarrel with Mrs. Hood. Stella expected him to come and speak to her; she even wished it, that she might tell him how beautiful his music was. She rather wondered to see him seek the sisters, Isabel and Adela, and, seated between them appear quite devoted to them. Adela played the guitar, the two girls sang charming little duets. Mr. Smythe fetched the instrument, and passed the broad blue ribbon over Adela's shoulders with an air that convinced Stella Mr. Smythe must be devotedly attached, like another Edgar Ravenswood, to that young lady. It was just such a manner as she had read of.

When the young ladies had finished their song a doubt crept over her, so earnest was now Mr. Smythe's look and whisper to Isabel, if, after all, Isabel might not be the object

of his secret adoration. Suddenly, before she could settle the point, there was a little bustle, and Miss Adela was led into a space cleared for her in the centre of the room. Once more Mr. Smythe placed the guitar in her hands and the ribbon over her neck. Adela played and danced to her own music a little figure dance, which so delighted Stella that she joined with the gentlemen in clapping. "So you admire the exhibition, do you?" said Mr. Smythe, coming up suddenly to her.

"I do, indeed; I shall be so glad to know how to dance."

"You would like to be in Miss Adela's place?"

"I am too big; but, when music is playing, I feel as if I could act a story to it."

"Do you?" and Mr. Smythe's face assumed an expression of actual disgust. "It is a strange coincidence," he continued, half to her, half to himself, "for you really reminded me at first sight of a person I once heard say something of the same sort." A recollection also shot through Stella's brain, a distressing recollection of what her mother's mother and her mother's sister had both been. Perhaps she was like them; and the inclination to rope-dancing, considered as such a disgraceful secret by her father's family, might run in that Spanish blood of hers. Who could tell but that this gentleman, so kind, so very kind, only a minute ago, now looking and speaking scornfully, might have seen those near relations performing? The feeling of anything in one's self, or in one's history, which is to be concealed, makes the most innocent ready to take alarm.

"I wish I could see my aunt," said Stella.

"I will find her for you," and Mr. Smythe moved away.

The sixteen-year-old Stella went home from her first party with a weight on her spirit. "I wonder what could make me say such a foolish thing?" was the ever-recurring thought.



CHAP. VIII.—S. S.

MR. STAPYLTON SMYTHE returned that night to his lodgings, over a circulating library in Mortimer Street, in Mrs. Bury's carriage. Every one knows the sort of half affectionate, half paternal manner gentlemen of a certain age adopt towards girls. Mrs. Bury, after depositing her ineligible cavalier,

employed the time of the drive from Mortimer Street to her own dwelling in Queen Anne Street in lecturing her two young ladies, and in calling Mr. Stapylton Smythe by very ugly names. Naturally, Isabel and Adela only liked him all the better; but we have nothing to do with Mrs. Bury or the "Bury girls," and a great deal to do with Mr. Stapylton Smythe. He has taken his candle from Miss Herring, who generally sits up for him herself. She is a spare woman of thirty-five, full of devotion to her lodger. She never presses him for money, and allows him to pay her by instalments, and at long intervals. Mr. Smythe has given her his sweet smile, and is now alone in his drawing-room, within which is his bed-room. The rooms are shabbily and scantily furnished; there are, however, handsomely bound books on the centre table, a vase of rare china, in which are costly exotic flowers. And on chairs are pictures of some pretension, as if waiting to be hung up; there is a Holy Family, a dying Magdalen (very green), and two small oil landscapes are on the chimney-piece. Foils, masks, boxing-gloves, Turkish yataghans, curious pipes, riding-whips, dog-whips, whistles, are scattered about the room. Before the smouldering fire a rich dressing-gown, rather worn at the elbows, is spread out on the shabby easy-chair, and a pair of elaborately worked slippers are inside the fender. Mr. Smythe has changed his evening coat for the dressing-gown, his polished boots for the slippers of red and gold; he holds his hands towards the fire; they are so thin and transparent that they have a false air of elegance; the feet are large and flat, and no thinness can give them an air of high race. In other respects Stapylton Smythe had an aristocratic look, though he had no right to it by birth; he had picked it up, as he had done other trifles, in his passage through life up to his thirty-ninth year. For instance, he had begun life as Richard Smith, he was now Stapylton Smythe; picked up two "y's" and an "e." He had a sort of right to the name of Stapylton, it being his mother's maiden name; and no doubt his manners, habits, and appearance were more in accordance with a Stapylton Smythe than with a Dick Smith.

Like many other agreeable, sensible people, Mr. Smythe seasoned his discourse with high and world-known titles, and might do so more truthfully than many. He had, at one period, the most brilliant episode of his career, been the *protégé* of the bosom friend of the wife of a premier of Great

Britain. He had made love to the lovely daughter of an English ambassador, and not been severely frowned away. He had been the idol of the young female part of a worthy admiral's family. There was a tradition extant, that one of those young ladies married out of pique under his very eyes, and was unhappy ever afterwards. Even at this present time, there were rumours afloat in his circle of his matrimonial intentions, the ladies, however, moving in a less elevated region—denizens of Harley Street and Devonshire Place, in lieu of Park Lane and Grosvenor Square. Fortune had been ever kindly to him who, in early life, had been Richard Smith. When he was twenty years old—that is to say, twenty years before the date of Mr. Hood's party—he had been offered the appointment of paymaster to a regiment, and had declined, forsooth, because he was not to wear exactly the same uniform as the officers. Richard was the fourth or fifth son of a small attorney of C——, and one of the handsomest fellows parading the streets of his native town—also a garrison town. The military life rejected, Richard Smith, the father, was at his wits' end how to dispose properly of a son so much the object of public admiration. The captain of a three-decker line-of-battle ship, a great growly old fellow, came to the rescue. He met the C—— Adonis at a jovial party, and was so highly delighted with his good looks, his singing, and his histrionic powers, that he forthwith offered him the berth of private secretary on board the old *Thunderbolt*—private secretary to help the gallant old captain to bear his *ennui*. The name of the thing decided its being accepted; Richard went on board the good ship, narrowly escaped any share in the naval glory won by the *Thunderbolt* through an attack of fever, which sent the private secretary to the hospital at Gibraltar. His illness, his youth and beauty—together with his friendlessness—excited quite a small sensation. Every woman on that remarkable and uncomfortable rock was interested for him, and when he was convalescent he received a pretty little ovation. The youth, in spite of his personal advantages, had a share of common sense; he would have nothing more to do with the sea—no, not though he could ride the waves triumphantly in a three-decker, like many other triumphs better to see than endure; he preferred going to Lisbon for change of air to making any attempt to rejoin the Jupiter of the *Thunderbolt*. He carried some letters of recommendation from his new friends to citizens of Lisbon, and very

soon after became manager to one among the first wine-merchants who have a *quinta* on the Tagus. During the years when France and Italy were dangerous resting-places, invalids from Great Britain were often sent to Lisbon and thereabouts. Among the consumptive patients came a lady, belonging to a noble family, with her husband. They were provided, as befitted their rank, with all sorts of excellent introductions; among others, with one to Smith's employer—a steady-going man, with a certain inaptitude for strangers. The old gentleman deputed his handsome manager to be his proxy—to be cicerone or purveyor to this English couple. The husband was a small lump of respectable mediocrity; the clever wife was literally dying of him: that at least was young Richard Smith's private opinion. This lady was a woman past youth; not handsome, but gifted with an enthusiastic, poetical temperament. She was as much Richard's superior in mind and heart as she was in station. At first his civilities procured for him a courteous reception, and then the invalid, like the navy captain, welcomed him as a resource from *ennui*. It was this lady who gave Mr. Smith his fine manners, and imbued him with her love for literature and the fine arts. She, in fact, educated him. It was again she who, on his visit afterwards to England, set him afloat in what *was*, but was not yet so nicknamed, the cream of English society; nay, she placed him in the very double cream. Richard, tired of the wine business and the Portuguese, corresponded with his patroness on the subject of a consulship; but he stipulated for one in Europe—he could not leave the sphere she inhabited; and if he could obtain this semi-demi-diplomatic post, would it be impossible to renew the days of Lisbon? The patroness really liked him, was grateful to him for the attentions which make an invalid state rather pleasant than otherwise, and brought it to pass that she might summon him from St. Mary's in Spain, his last date, to comply with some formalities. She had obtained the promise of a vacant consulship. The letter, it sought him up, it sought him down—at St. Mary's, at Lisbon—and it sought in vain for a time. When it did reach him, instead of hurrying to England with the speed of a queen's messenger, he wrote a long-winded reply, to say he would come some day; it was quite in the man's character to let a whim interfere with a serious object. This was the flow of his fortunes: like many he dallied with it, a tide to-day, and

a tide to-morrow—it cannot make much difference; but it does, and he found it out to his consternation. When he arrived in London, his patroness was dead and buried; had died at last of her malady, whatever it was—and there was an end of the consulship for Mr. Richard Smith. That occurred somewhere about 1817, and now, verging towards the Christmas of 1827, within three weeks of it, we find him lodging in Mortimer Street. Mr. Stapylton Smythe is the name printed on his visiting-cards, and Mrs. Hood, the rich shipowner's wife, is his patroness.

Mr. Hood, in one of his disagreeable moods, had questioned Mrs. Harriette, his wife, as to the ways and means of her new and agreeable friend—Mr. Hood never feeling at his ease in a poor gentleman's company. Mrs. Harriette had indignantly retorted that no one had any business with how Mr. Smythe lived. Every man to his gifts; one was born to be a mill-horse (Mr. Hood may take that slap to himself if he so pleases), and another to be a Pegasus. A Pegasus might be forced to wear a yoke; but no person with eyes to his understanding would expect Pegasus to have the lumbering gait of said mill-horse. For one thing, Mrs. Harriette knew to a certainty that Mr. Smythe wrote in newspapers and magazines, and that he had interviews with members of parliament on commercial questions. "Ha! if so," replied the shipowner, ironically, "he may be of use to me."

"You will find it true, however you may laugh at me, Mr. Hood: one of these days he will be the principal of a great speculation, and you'll regret not believing me." The shipowner, to his surprise, found his wife's assertion pretty well borne out; and then he took to relishing Mr. Smythe's society, though he still considered him, as formerly, a cross between the adventurer and mendicant. Mrs. Hood saw the upper side of the medal only, Mr. Hood the reverse. Mr. Smythe, however, had not only the two sides to his character common to mankind in general, but many sides. His intellectual faculties were high, his moral qualities low; he thought nobly, acted meanly; his understanding was enlightened, his heart only full of love of self. He admired goodness, worshipped simplicity; and consorted with the artificial and sensual. His errors were not the fruit of evil principles, for his theory was excellent. He might have said, as a classical heroine did, or did not, "I see the better, and

still follow the worse."* But to bear witness by *deeds* to goodness, required an amount of sacrifice of which he did not feel himself capable. So he let himself go with the torrent, and committed the thousand and one meannesses, falsehoods, and treacheries, which are indispensable in those who live and would be welcome in a certain world; and when his conscience smote him too hard, which it did at times, then he became cynical, bitter, even misanthropic for a couple of days or so. This was his safety-valve; and he then returned to his old ways and tenor of life with the consciousness of having paid the tribute an honest man ought to do, to virtue. On his first acquaintance with Mrs. Hood, she had been in the habit of advising her friend to marry some girl with money. They discussed the point; she urging, he declining, declaring that, though far from impeccable, he had a horror of mercenary marriages. This was very true, and led to many confidences of former possibilities neglected; and thus Mrs. Hood became acquainted with what great fish Mr. Smythe had swum. Once, indeed, Mrs. Hood had pushed her anxiety so far as to find the very young lady most suitable for him, and had gone into hysterics, because he would not accept the invitation she had obtained. When he yielded and went, he discovered his intended bride to be deformed and subject to fits. A dark page followed; for Mr. Smythe did not drop the acquaintance, and consciously or unconsciously (are such things ever unconsciously done?) won the girl's heart, and then acted up to his noble maxim of not marrying for money. There was a painful scene, for which Mrs. Hood was made accountable by all parties. A scene there was, of a girl on her knees, praying only to be allowed to breathe the same atmosphere as that handsome, accomplished, shallow-hearted man, and to let him take all her worldly wealth.

Men do occasionally appear—a great rarity, no doubt—who set themselves up as rivals to “green-eyed maids” and “warbling syrens,” in whose elderly eyes foolish girls will “descry heaven.” It is very rare that men ever break hearts, or lay waste other human lives: they leave all that sort of evil-doing to the weaker sex. Well, every one concerned laid the blame of this bit of tragedy on Mrs. Hood: so ever since that, she had let alone the subject of matrimony with Mr. Smythe. His intimacy with the Hoods continued. He liked a safe, luxurious lounge, his imagination demanded the

* “*Video meliora proboque: deteriora sequor.*”

sight of gold and silver and Tyrian colours. His taste guided that of Mrs. Hood, and though expensive, it was still good taste. Mr. Smythe called himself the Hoods' friend. Theirs was not friendship, it was an affair of calculation on both sides. It was a mere superficial association, in which the capital was flattery and amusement. Mr. Smythe sat now in his brocade dressing-gown, tongs in hand, picking up bits of cinder, and building with them an arch over the two or three red coals at the bottom of the grate. He was doing this, as persons do on whom an uncomfortable thought has laid hold, mechanically, and without any particular interest to succeed in their occupation. There come lulls in every troubled life—seasons of a certain regularity, in which the possibility of a renewal of former agitations and distresses seems out of the question. There comes a time when a man, as it were, forgets the past, each suffering or disaster rubbing out the trace of its predecessor, until a whole series of events fall out of his habit of thought, and then suddenly either the pronouncing of a name, the sight of a countenance, a tone of voice, even some tune pitilessly wailed forth by an organ-grinder, summons to sight, in all their pristine vigour, the *dramatis personæ* and the drama of long ago. Stella's appearance had done this for Mr. Smythe. Had he had a confidant by his side, he would have made strange revelations that night, so strongly was his memory stirred. As it was, he was showman and spectator in one.



CHAP. IX.—A STORY TOLD BY DANCING.

"It is half-past nine, miss, and it is Sunday." These were the words that forced Stella to open her eyes on the morning after Mrs. Hood's party.

"Is Miss Dashwood down-stairs, Firman?" asked Stella, of auntie's own maid, and bounding out of bed, though it was a bitter cold December morning. The "Yes, miss," induced the young lady to inquire, in a sort of desperate soliloquy, "Why *did* Mrs. Hood invite us on a Saturday evening?" To account for this uneasiness, it is necessary to state that the Major and Miss Dashwood were exceedingly strenuous as to the propriety of church-going. They had failed in making a convert of Celia to their views on that point; so much diplo-

matic talent in avoiding church had Mrs. Dashwood displayed, that at last Aunt Philly ceased to suppose her attending divine service possible; but Major Dashwood, having less mother-wit, had continued to this very Sunday putting the same question to his wife, and making the same remark on her refusal. "Very wrong—very wrong, indeed. I wonder what people will think?" Celia, on her side, varying her replies from either—"I can't help what people think; but I cannot sit such a time to hear that poor dear Mr. Prosser go on and on, getting into the wilderness, and never getting out of it again;" or, "I really can-*not*, it is so cold," or "so hot. Medical men say the half of women's illnesses in England arise from their inveterate church-going in all weathers. If I had a carriage, I shouldn't mind."

Major Dashwood would be sometimes silently cross—sometimes wordily so. "I wonder if you have any religion in you?"

"To be sure I have; perhaps more than you steady Phari-saical church-goers: you indemnify yourselves for the sacrifice by harsh judgments on those who stay away. I don't care, besides." The "don't care" was irrefutable.

When Stella came to Waterloo Cottage, Celia, it must be owned, was quite willing to make of her a Sunday offering, even had not the girl herself liked to go to church. There was more of Sabbath peace at the cottage since Stella's arrival there. Major Dashwood was much consoled by having another member of the family to fill the pew. Stella was delighted at finding herself one of an orderly crowd flocking with one intent towards the venerable ivy-covered building. The burst of the organ, heralding the approach of the officiating clergyman, inspired her with awe. Inside and outside of the church, the inviting bells, God's Acre so thickly planted, the anthems, the one voice uplifted above all, the rush of whispered responses, all expressed one meaning to Stella:—"Think of God. Remember the Lord." "True hearts," like Stella's, "spread and heave unto their God as flowers do unto the sun." Stella, in right of her real love of going to church, and also, it must be owned, her willing backgammon-playing, basked in the sunshine of Aunt Philly's favour, and, being a girl most greedy of affection, and most grateful for it, she must be excused now if it were more the dread of that lady's lowering brow, than even the fear of being late for morning service, that made her dash through the duties of her toilette

so rapidly. "There is a deal of human nature in us," says some one who knows that peculiar subject well. Thus it was, that the over-night's new scenes and new persons successfully disputed with Stella's prayers that morning. "Why, indeed, did Mrs. Hood ask us on a Saturday evening to a dance?" One thought in particular would come back, in spite of clergyman and organ. Most people know the disagreeable sensation of regretting something said that had better have been left unsaid—Stella's case just now. It was so disagreeable to think that she had lowered herself in Mr. Smythe's opinion, that she longed to see him again just once, to explain that she meant nothing wrong by making a story to dancing music; probably even if she ever did meet him again, he would not speak to her, and so, that Sunday, church was of little use to Stella. Returning from church, near the gate of Waterloo Cottage (she could scarcely credit her eyes) she descried a gentleman standing there, and that gentleman the very one she had been thinking of, and was so desirous to see again. She was further quite astonished at the smile with which he greeted her. Not a trace in his agreeable face of any displeasure. Celia was first surprised, then delighted to see the visitor. Stapylton Smythe was not in the habit of calling at the cottage—her intimacy with him being the shadow of his intimacy with her friend Harriette. "Had he brought her a message from the Lodge?"

"No, indeed." Mr. Smythe had come to pay them a visit on his own account, and he had brought a pretty book to show to Miss Juddrell in particular; and he smiled very significantly, but so pleasantly, that Stella never imagined the smile had any allusion in it to her last night's speech. Mr. Smythe's smiles had very little effect on Aunt Philly. She looked very sour when he made her his bow at the outer gate, and she continued to look very sour at him, even after he had risen on purpose to place a screen between her and the fire, twice recovered the shawl which, like most shawls, would fall off her shoulders, and praised the tartlets and seed-cake, both of home manufacture, he was sure, by their exceeding superiority. There are some enviable people whose intuition with respect to administering praise partakes of the miraculous. It is difficult to offer an acceptable compliment to an artist or an author; but to thaw a cross old maiden lady into friendliness against her will, requires positive sincerity. Aunt Philly had her just share of weaknesses. She was bigoted, to begin

with—no salvation out of the pale of her opinions. Vain—yes, though she was on the sharp edge of seventy—"didn't know if she mightn't make some worthy man happy yet, and disappoint some expectations." She was exacting, egotistical, but very shrewd, and also conscientious according to her lights. Mr. Smythe prided himself on his fine tact, but no tact ever answered with Aunt Philly. He praised the cookery, as if that were the only thing Aunt Philly could understand, and changed his topic as soon as he addressed Celia or Stella. Nothing so irritating as to have people visibly bringing down their talk to what they judge to be the level of your comprehension. Aunt Philly was in the habit of boasting that she could see as far through a mill-stone as her neighbours, and as Mr. Smythe was neither so thick nor so passive as a mill-stone, there was no reason why she should not see through him also. She was herself as hard and as rough as granite to her visitor. Mr. Smythe brought out of his pocket a thin book, elegantly bound in purple velvet. He opened this small volume, and showed the frontispiece to Celia, who exclaimed—"Oh, how capital! Come here, Stella." Mr. Smythe, who was seated by Mrs. Dashwood, looked up and smiled in Stella's face, as she took her station behind her aunt's chair. "This is a story told by dancing," he said; "the story of *Flore et Zéphyr*; and a friend of mine has painted it from the life, as represented at Her Majesty's Theatre." The illustrations were in water-colours, finely drawn and brilliantly coloured. The first of the number was *Flore* on tiptoes—her dress whirling like a cloud about a figure that had a fairy look, certainly; but the face! the berouged cheeks, the fierce eyebrows, the dancer's terrible smile, the strained muscles of the neck, the panting of the thin but thickly padded bust, were all minutely portrayed; perhaps too cruelly faithful to truth. The Major capped his wife's admiration by a "'Pon my honour, it's famous; it is now, 'pon my honour." Miss Dashwood would not look at it when the book was offered to her, declaring such sights were not fit for Sunday. Stella had grown very red, and remained perfectly silent. The next picture was of *Zéphyr*, a stout middle-aged man, wings at his shoulders, and a diminutive petticoat round his waist, suspending himself in mid-air, his knees and feet close together, his mouth distended by a painful grin, intended to hide the effort with which he violated one of the laws of nature.

Once more Celia and the Major emphasized on the fun and ability displayed by the artist; now came the group of *Flore et Zéphyr*, the goddess balancing herself on one foot, on the knee of the West Wind. The clever artist had given a slight slant to that knee, to indicate that it bent under the weight it was sustaining, while *Flore's* off leg was held out or up at its greatest stretch, and so until the story arrived at its conclusion, the happiness of the hero and heroine indicated by each holding high in air one of their legs, evidently in the act of giving the breathless spectators what the Italians call the "*benedizione delle gambe*." "Very clever—very clever," said the Major.

"Now, do tell us who did them!" cried Celia.

"Miss Joddrell, what do you think of a story told by dancing?"

"Did you think I ever imagined anything so ugly as that?" asked Stella, with indignation in her voice.

"But this is the reality of a ballet," rejoined Mr. Smythe.

"But I suppose I was not thinking of reality," replied Stella.

"I'll be bound you were not, my dear," burst out Aunt Philly. "It's strange to me that any gentleman should bring such shameful things to show a young lady—married ladies seem to think they may see or hear anything. I should just like any one to have dared to show me such pictures when my poor mother was alive—he wouldn't have done it twice, I can tell him!"

"I disapprove of what the book represents, ma'am, as much as you do," answered Mr. Smythe, gravely. "It was to show Miss Joddrell the reverse of the medal."

"What medal, sir? But it doesn't matter; another time I advise you to remember that the Apostle says, 'With the knowledge of evil——' What's it?" turning to the Major.

"I understand you, ma'am," said Mr. Smythe; "you mean that, 'by the law is the knowledge of sin.'"

"I dare say you are right, sir—you seem to know everything. I am a poor ignorant old woman, who can't argue. Pray, don't let me be any further interruption to you."

It was quite astonishing how cheerfully Mr. Smythe took his rebuff—quite astonishing, at least to Stella, who felt ashamed of Miss Dashwood, and ashamed for Mr. Smythe. She went and stood by herself in the window, as though anxious to withdraw herself from the conversation. She was greatly mortified by the ridicule implied by Mr. Smythe's

bringing those caricatures. The evening before, by look and manner, he had captivated a beginning of her confidence; she had willingly told him her impressions, nor had his half-expressed displeasure militated against him; on the contrary, she had at once accorded him a decided superiority. Now, her young girl's pride was wounded; she felt as though he had taken an unwarrantable liberty in showing her those pictures. The young admire easily, but they are as intolerant as they are enthusiastic; reality, in general, shocks them. Mr. Smythe presently came to Stella, saying, "Do you not admire '*Flore et Zéphyr*?' "

"No, sir."

"Why do you call me 'sir?' Grown-up young ladies only use that respectful title to very venerable beaux." Mr. Smythe was always conscious of not being yet forty. He succeeded in making the colour rise in Stella's cheeks, but no smile answered his; her smiles did not come at every bidding. He went on—"I see that none, not even the most innocent of your sex, can bear the truth. Your illusions must be cherished, or we fall into disgrace: we must always present nectar to your lips. Suppose I had replied to you last evening by a compliment on your poetical feelings, you would be lavishing sweet smiles on me at this very moment." Mr. Smythe had guessed the very way to treat Stella, and his air of sincerity was not assumed: she had taken his fancy. "I have been very stupid to displease you."

"I don't understand you very well," replied Stella; "but I am sure I did not want any compliments."

"Let us make friends;" and he held out his hand. With a little hesitation, Stella gave him hers; it was a finely-shaped, but thin, and not at all a yielding hand. "You have not looked at me, and that's a bad sign of peace," insisted Mr. Smythe. She showed him a face that feared not the light, and again he wondered who she was.

Aunt Philly had recommenced her usual fidgeting in and out of the room. Her habits did not belong to the kingdom of courtesy. She cared little for the current of cold air constantly inflicted on the occupants of the dining-room by her exits and entrances; nay, nor yet for the admission of savoury perfumes from the kitchen: all the intermediate doors must be opened, that the careful eye of the mistress might be on her handmaids. Sundays were her especial days of fidget. Church added to State affairs. Mr. Smythe had contributed

another item to her disturbance. "Well, my dear, are you coming?" This to Stella. "I have my bonnet on, and the afternoon bells are ringing." Stella moved from the window with alacrity. Mr. Smythe glanced at Mrs. Dashwood. "Suppose you take a walk with us this afternoon, Stella?" said Celia: "the sun is shining so brightly, the heath will be lovely." Aunt Philly twisted round savagely, and surveyed Celia and her niece in a way that made Stella say—"I had better go with Miss Dashwood."

"Don't you think," asked Mr. Smythe of the young lady, "that the looking on the outward signs of the Eternal and Divine preaches to us as well as any words of man?"

"You don't seem to know much of the church, sir," retorted Aunt Philly, briskly. "We don't go to listen to MAN'S words." Mr. Smythe bowed, as though he would have said, "I am convinced." Stella went to church: Miss Philly all the way giving vent to short startling denunciations of the Evil One going about like a roaring lion, and of wolves in sheep's clothing. Major Dashwood, his wife, and Mr. Smythe's walk to the heath ended at the Hoods', and there the conversation was of that kind which has the trick of condemning the faults the speakers have no mind to. People are mightily fond of arranging the mortal and immortal chances of others according to their own ideas of right and wrong; according as they clash or harmonize with their own pet wrong-doing, or even with their social interests. How indulgent in the one case!—Let us not judge, they say. How severe in another!—Let them be stoned. Go where you will, with some few honourable exceptions, under one form of speech or another, sentence is being passed by one erring fellow-creature on another. During all the gossip going on in Mrs. Hood's drawing-room, and in which Mr. Smythe took a witty part, he was secretly thinking of, and contrasting with these two lady friends of his, Stella and her simplicity, her straightforward candour, her dawning beauty, which made her a rare specimen of young womanhood. Pity it was, he was saying to himself, that she had fallen among such commonplace people! If he meant by commonplace the morally vulgar, Mr. Smythe was right. Moral vulgarity is never self-denying, never generous; uncalculating enthusiasm it abhors; moral vulgarity is without just ideas of what is due from man to man: so that, except a downright morally vicious atmosphere, there can be none more deteriorating or more hardening than a commonplace

one. Now Mr. Smythe's theories, as before said, were unimpeachable. He was one of those who burn a taper to God, one to the Devil, and make a bow to St. Michael.



CHAP. X.—CANDLES ON THREE ALTARS.

AN experienced old lady once said to her daughter, who was fretting her with various devices how to make easy a gentleman's visits—"My dear, if he wishes to come, he will find a way without your help." Mr. Smythe easily found a way to visit, and that with steady regularity, at Waterloo Cottage. Middle age had not cooled his imagination. He had among various talents that one of speedily accomplishing intimacy. He did not drag out hours with his hat in his hand, dropping into silences that make some people feel probably like criminals in a dock. He left his hat on the hall table, and entered right into the family occupations, whatever they might be. He would not have been out of his place with Aunt Philly in the kitchen; he would have proclaimed that man is a cooking animal, and proposed amendments in sauces, with a smile that would have made sure of his measures being adopted. It is quite certain that he made Waterloo Cottage more cheerful; most peculiarly so to Stella. He inaugurated her into the world of literature, and into the domain of the fine arts; above all, he gave her the inestimable advantage of interchange of thought with a cultivated mind. She followed Mr. Smythe's lead with great ardour, but he found her no humble postulant; she had a searching, inquisitive mind, and often put him on his mettle with her why and wherefore. It was on such occasions that Stella awoke to the charm of self-control and courtesy; she saw the influence these qualities possessed, and how often her impetuosity placed what was right in itself in an odious light. She had that genuine love of beauty which belongs to strong and perfect organization. So she hated her own brusquerie, and strove in earnest after gentleness and grace of mind and body. Mr. Smythe had set it down in his plan to be the Pygmalion of Stella's intellect; he was to show a godlike benevolence; holding himself free from all selfish impulses: but the celestial spark which he was blowing into a flame was in danger of lighting the taper to the devil. No risk of my exciting her heart. May she, sweet child, ever

remain ignorant of how great is my interest in her. My aim is solely to develop her fine mind. I should wish to possess her innocent affection, to have her attached to me, as I am to her, without any thought of the future. It was not difficult for a Stapylton Smythe to make a Celia Dashwood believe in this sort of reasoning. His conscience was as light as a feather; never did he miss an opportunity of declaring that he was not a marrying man: he was besides always putting pretty auntie on her guard, taking her into confidence about his determined celibacy—the necessary result of health, and age, and circumstances. Never was a matron more carefully warned not to look for a husband for her niece in him. When alone with Mrs. Dashwood it was thus: “You think me an idle dog, Mrs. Dashwood. But I am a man of many trials, without any claims on my time and labour. I may be as lazy as I please, I defraud no one when I pass hours in this happy nook. Let me do the little good that falls in my way. I am too lazy to go a hand’s-breadth to find any for myself; let me lead this dear girl through the morning gate of the beautiful into the magnificent, unbounded realms of knowledge. Were I ten years younger it would be impossible, I know. Every age has its privilege—a sad enough privilege the one I lay claim to.”

Celia thought, “How charmingly he expresses himself! How delightfully different from other people!” and believed herself as doing a real good action to both Stella and Mr. Smythe when she welcomed him to his seat in the warmest corner of the sofa, with a little reading-table at hand. “I am growing a better man in your pure, healthy society. You don’t know how charitable you are,” says Mr. Smythe to Celia.

“Reclaiming the heathen,” replied Celia, smiling: while Stella opened her eyes, and wondered what Mr. Smythe meant by growing a better man; he had, then, been bad once? None of the heroes she had any knowledge of had ever been bad at the beginning. Such confessions did not suit her ideal.

“You view me with astonished eyes, Miss Joddrell. I understand your look. You cannot imagine, in your innocence, what a Pandemonium general society is. What a fiction every man is, and still more so, every woman in the great world. No physical malaria is more destructive to our bodily health than the corruptions of fashions to our moral strength. Frauds and tricks on every side, nothing true. Everything artificial, nothing valued but show and glitter: the obligation to shine

and live beyond one's means under penalty of social ostracism. What a contrast I find here!" and the speech concluded with a smile pointed by a sigh. And so Mr. Smythe burned candles on his three altars, and enjoyed the light and warmth they gave him, thoroughly.

One would have imagined that much less than this accomplished, handsome gentleman gave would have sufficed to obtain a complete hold on so naïve and ignorant a young creature as this Miss Joddrell. But Mr. Stapylton Smythe was certain that he had imparted no new life to his present Galatea. The contradictory elements of human nature began, therefore, to make Mr. Smythe more imprudent; that is, more in earnest than he had been for half a score of years. But Stella did not understand the fascination of reforming Mr. Smythe. She did not like what she did understand of the glimpses he gave her of his so-called Pandemonium. She was dreaming, dear girl, of a hero—of a Bayard—*sans peur et sans reproche*. How could Mr. Smythe's self-pity agree with her idea? Besides, he was not at all like Ravenswood. No, no: Mr. Smythe's is not the hand that will strike the "living lyre," and make it conscious of its own melody. She was one of those who must worship, and not one who would love from pity. And Celia, that pretty silly auntie, was often provoked at the girl's unconsciousness. "As much a baby as if she were entering her seventh instead of her seventeenth year," thought Mrs. Dashwood—ungrateful instead of piously thankful to Providence for such a *statu quo*. "She takes everything he says or does as a matter of course—is as callous as a stone." Mrs. Celia had already, at thirty, forgotten what young girls are; indeed, her knowledge of the heart was of the most limited kind. Having never experienced any of the more violent emotions of the soul, she had no fear of them. There was another subject for Celia to speculate on, and that was what Mrs. Harriette felt at the late defalcation in S. S.'s allegiance. But not a whit better could Mrs. Dashwood understand her friend than her niece. Once when Celia had been pouting at Harriette and making some explanations, Harriette had placed her finger across Celia's lips, saying, "Hush! *Qui s'excuse, s'accuse*." Mrs. Hood's smile was as saucy and agreeable as ever, the Dashwoods and Mr. Smythe dined as often as before at the Lodge: if ever Mrs. Hood did thrust her claws through her velvet gloves and give Stapylton Smythe a scratch, he never told. Mrs. Hood was accustomed

to his aberrations; she was not, indeed, opposed to their occasionally occurring. She was indisputably what the French call a *maitresse femme*, for which the term "superior," or "strong-minded," is not an equivalent.

For six weeks, then, Mr. Smythe was daily at Waterloo Cottage, trying to cultivate Stella's taste for literature and the fine arts; each day of the forty-two making him feel younger, happier, healthier than he had done since the Lisbon days. The end of these six weeks brings us to the beginning of February, 1828. On the morning of the 4th, Major Dashwood announced the arrival of the Jamaica packet, and again the postman was fruitlessly watched. "Something must be wrong," exclaimed Celia.

"Perhaps your brother may be coming home himself," conjectured the major, looking at his wife. "I should not wonder. In fact," turning now to Stella, "it must be so, we shall see your father: my dear, we may have him here at any hour. Yes; that's it, depend on it, depend on it." The major made this reiteration because he saw Celia about to contradict him.

"What abominable nonsense!" cried Celia: vexed out of an intended more polite disclaimer, by the way the major had raised his voice to annihilate hers.

"Why nonsense, my dear? You are not a prophetess—you don't know everything that's going to happen. Why shouldn't I guess right sometimes? Pooh! pooh! pooh! You say No: I say Yes. Who is right? Toss up: heads or tails? Ha! ha! ha!" It was not often the major broke out so turbulently, but when he did he could be peculiarly irritating. "Here you see," he went on, "I was right about Jamaica. The House of Assembly in a state of rebellion. No doubt of that d——d emancipation. Listen." And he read aloud from the newspaper he held in his hand, "They say they expected to have had the King's approbation of their new slave law, having conceded every point not positively dangerous. Can't you listen to me, Celia, for a moment?" But Celia drank her tea, and whispered to Stella, "Let us go to the drawing-room and get a little quiet."

"Too bad—too bad!" muttered the major, as his wife disappeared. Stella lingered at the door; she wished to hear more on the subject.

"You see, madam," addressing Aunt Philly, "your party had got their will; slaves were admitted to give evidence against whites, and now they have had to go back to the old

law, and serve them right, for not being satisfied with good, without asking for better. The anti-slavery party will cut their own throats yet.

"No, they won't," said Aunt Philly, stoutly. "All I hope is that the planters will be so cruel, that the blacks will rise and murder every man Jack of them; if they'd take my advice, they'd soon have emancipation. And now you know my mind, perhaps you'll let me finish my breakfast in peace."

"But, madam, I tell you, your friends are forfeiting the humane provisions——"

"Humane, indeed!" said Aunt Philly; adding, "A set of Jews and Jesuits, with their whips and their chains——"

"God bless me, madam, let me explain!" interrupted the major.

"You won't change my opinion, whatever you explain, nephew; no man can do that, thank God!"

"But, madam, Jews and Jesuits! Surely you will let a man explain." It was of no use, the major had to strike his colours.

Celia was not only disappointed, but greatly perplexed at receiving no letter from Stella's father. Did he mean to leave the girl on her hands, whether she would or not? Mrs. Hood called, but although the two ladies spoke in whispers, it did not need more penetration than Stella possessed, to be very sure that, somehow or other, some change had been contemplated for her. Her stern grandmother's words, "The pretty auntie you think so much of will pet and flatter you, but she won't be troubled with you," recurred distinctly to her recollection. "Am I always to be on sufferance with people?" thought poor Stella. "Oh! for a home, and some one really to care for me!" Then she remembered her answer to her grandmother's warning: "I will care for my friends, and never think whether they love me or not." She struggled valiantly that day to keep her promise. It is to be remarked how strangely, amid the vicissitudes of our lives, one set of circumstances cling to us through them all. With some, it is their fate to have bad health to struggle against; with others, in every connection they have or make, it is a scramble for money enough—not poverty exactly, but insecurity—single, married, widowed, always in the same predicament. Then again, some never can have a settled home, but are tossed about from country to country, in spite of will or

inclination : their neighbours, on the contrary, condemned to be fixtures. With Stella, her case seemed to be that of a waif or stray.

CHAP. XI.—MIRANDA.

MR. SMYTHE might have discovered what quicksands he was nearing, by the anxiety he could not subdue to hear if a letter from Mr. Joddrell had been received at Waterloo Cottage. He also had read in the morning paper that the Jamaica mail was in. It was severe weather, unfit for any delicate constitution to brave. Snow had fallen, and turned into mud in London ; but on the road near Kilburn it lay like a thick white carpet. Mr. Smythe spent some shillings he could not afford, to reach the cottage with dry feet. He had so long shown indulgence to all his vagaries of feelings, there was no chance that he would set a curb on a fancy now. He was far more likely to class it as a good impulse. Was it not a sign of goodness to love what is good ! Did not Stella's society keep him out of mischief ? Did not her pure thoughts disinfect his mind of evil ones ? Did she not drive away that miserable under-current of uneasiness and dissatisfaction, that nothing hitherto had deadened save wild excitement ? " Tell me with whom you live, and I will tell you what you are." Were they not among the best creatures living, the inmates of Waterloo Cottage ? Imperfect beings : yes, but with an angel for their guest. The image of this angel, with her fine slim body, her elastic, springy mountaineer's step, her eye with still the frank stern look of childhood, whom he had called to himself the Miranda of the desert island of his heart, she could not cure him, but while he was with her he ceased to think of his causes of irritation. He smiled even now as he recollected the conversation which led him to be travelling in a hackney-coach on this snowy night to the cottage to read the *Tempest* to Stella. He had happened to call her Miranda, in answer to Mrs. Dashwood's lamentations over some of her niece's singularities, and, with the sort of defiant manner to which Celia could not be reconciled, Stella had asked—" And who is Miranda ?"

" The only child of Prospero, Duke of Milan, Miss Joddrell," he had replied, laughing.

"My dear girl, don't you recollect Miranda and Caliban in the *Tempest*?" had observed Celia, rebukingly.

"I never read the *Tempest*, Auntie."

"Miranda," exclaimed Mr. Smythe, "was a young lady about your age, Miss Joddrell, brought up from a child on an enchanted island by her exiled wizard of a father; they had a bad spirit to do their hard work, and a lovely sprite called Ariel to put a girdle round the waist of the earth, when they pleased to order him to do so; and there was a shipwreck, and a handsome cousin thrown quite conveniently on the coast."

"Have you the play, auntie?" The enchanted island, the solitary girl, the arrival of the cousin, the bad and good spirits, had made Stella's voice very eager.

"Yes, of course." And then Mr. Smythe had pleaded,

"Allow me to have the pleasure of introducing your niece to her likeness. You don't know, perhaps, that I have gained honours in my day, by my reading of Shakspeare. Let me prove I am not unequal to my younger self," for Celia hesitated. "I assure you, Mrs. Dashwood," guessing at last the cause of Celia's unusual backwardness, "I manage my author as well as any editor for families."

So it was arranged there should be a reading of the *Tempest* some evening; and on this fourth of February, Mr. Smythe determined to go to Waterloo Cottage and say, "I have come in spite of weather to read the *Tempest*." He was very welcome as usual—to all but Aunt Philly—on whom, however, the habit of seeing him had rubbed away some of the sharp corners of her antipathy to him. The ladies took their work, the major was admonished to be quiet in the nap he always indulged in after dinner, and the reading began. Girls of sixteen, far more precocious in their feelings than was our young lady, might hear the *Tempest* read for the first time, without discovering any great beauty or interest in it, beyond what any love-tale would possess for them. But Stella had a noble imagination, it wanted words to express itself in; but it never failed to kindle at the contact of what was grand and beautiful. When Mr. Smythe read the scene where Miranda first sees Ferdinand, the girl's work dropped on her knee; Mr. Smythe always read admirably, but to such a listener, who, with her beautiful young face all a-light with intelligence, sat there hanging on his words, he read miraculously. He had reached the scene where Ferdinand is

carrying wood, to the speech where Miranda asks, "Do you love me?" and Ferdinand answers:

"O heaven, O earth, bear witness to this sound,
And crown what I possess with kind event,
If I speak true; if hollowly, invert
What best is boded me to mischief. I,
Beyond all limit of what else i' the world
Do love, prize, and honour you.

Miranda. I am a fool,
To weep at what I am glad of."

As the gathered tears in Stella's eyes here rolled down her cheeks, pale with emotion, a loud ring at the bell startled them all, waking the major and bringing him to his feet. Old Pompey was heard to stumble along the passage—there was a pause of uneasy expectation, ended by Pompey throwing wide the drawing-room door, his mouth on so broad a grin that he could not articulate, and ushering in a gentleman. The stranger had on rather an incongruous dress. A dark-blue riding-cloak, lined with red, the collar up to his ears, and nankeen trousers. Every one stared inquisitively at him for a couple of seconds, as people do when an unknown individual presents himself like a bomb among them. Then Stella, clapping her hands, cried out, "It's cousin Louis—it's cousin Louis," and ran to him with an extended hand, which she almost thrust into his.

"If I am cousin Louis," returned the stranger, looking earnestly at her, "you must be cousin Stella."

"Yes, indeed I am," was the rejoinder, in a joyous voice. A scene followed of mingled congratulations and explanations. "When did he arrive in England? Why had he come? Business! Oh! well, time enough to talk of that," says the major to his inquisitive wife, "let your cousin have something to eat." Mr. Gautier had never seen Major Dashwood—Celia's marriage having taken place after Louis had left England. Celia looked curiously at the two gentlemen, as they stood side by side—both good-looking, very different though. Mr. Gautier must be presented to Miss Philadelphia Dashwood. He had fallen into a nest of new connections, one within another, like a nest of tables. "Our friend, Mr. Stapylton Smythe—my cousin, Mr. Gautier." One seldom sees beams of benevolence pass between men at a first meeting, but here there was a decided evolvment of repulsion. Their eyes met like swords, keen, bright, piercing, the

glances flashed at each other and over each other, from head to foot. At that moment, when Stella put her hand into her cousin's with so joyful a cry, Mr. Smythe's heart had leaped up with a bound of hatred against the stranger. He hated Louis at once, and broadly and deeply. There is hate at first sight, as well as love. Mr. Smythe remembered vividly at this instant, he never utterly forgot it, that time when he had wilfully neglected his noble patroness's recall to England, and slipped for ever from Fortune's ladder, on which she had so anxiously placed him. Was it, indeed, abstract goodness, abstract beauty, that he sought at Waterloo Cottage? Mr. Smythe, however, smiled blandly in return to Mr. Gautier's grim bow. Mr. Smythe smiled on, though his heart was withering within him, as if the avenging angel of his past life had suddenly stood before him. Mr. Smythe smiled on, as he listened to the cordial pressing of the Dashwoods, that Louis would remain at the Cottage—smiled as he heard Stella's clear voice; never before had he heard in it so joyful a sound, as when praying cousin Louis to stay. "She had so much to ask him." Smiled even when he saw the brilliant colour of excitement on her cheeks, making her more like Miranda than ever. How friendless he suddenly felt in that room he had been used to deem so friendly! Family ties, that he had scoffed at, were now very nearly his envy—no one to cry, "God bless him!" as he should take his leave.

Mr. Gautier, who had been hitherto excusing himself from accepting the Dashwoods' hospitality, yielded now at his young cousin's solicitation. "I will take advantage of Mr. Gautier's hackney-coach to return to London," said Mr. Smythe. He shook hands very warmly all round, except with cousin Louis, who gave him another grim bow. Celia forgot her usual "When shall we see you again?" and the "not marrying man" rattled back to his lodgings in Mortimer Street, with a chilling perception of having entirely missed the right road in life. Aunt Philly bustled away to prepare "the best room" for the stranger, and Stella, having her one question of, "Is papa quite well?" answered affirmatively, ran after Miss Dashwood, to help that lady. It was Stella who dragged up Mr. Gautier's valise, at some risk to the carefully preserved stair-carpet. It was Stella who dressed the toilette-table, and insisted on the best of everything being brought out of the linen closets for her cousin, her own cousin's use. "How nice my cousin will think this, after

the horrid ship," observed Stella to the smart housemaid, warming the bed.

"He has an outlandish look, miss, hasn't he?" asked the critical Maria.

"And so he ought," says Stella, "for he comes off the sea from far distant lands."

"Well, for my part," returns Maria, "I must say I prefer the regular English to all the world." Stella heaped coals on the fire, stirred it up to a fierce blaze, surveyed the room with satisfaction, but lamented that gentlemen did not need pin-cushions nor ringstands, so that the dressing-table looked quite bare. The only article of luxury she possessed, a gay blotting-paper book, Celia's Christmas present to her, she brought and placed on the writing-table, instead of the black leather one belonging to Aunt Philly. In the meantime, Major and Mrs. Dashwood had been listening to a most portentous piece of news, and for which they were totally unprepared. Mr. Joddrell, Stella's father, had taken a wife—had been married for nearly a couple of months, when the news of his mother's death reached him. His letter announcing his marriage must have crossed that from Celia, informing him of Mrs. Joddrell's decease. This was the conclusion arrived at by a comparison of the probable dates of the respective communications, and Mr. Joddrell's subsequent letters to his mother and daughter were probably still in the custody of the drunken clerk at Evian. "Poor Stella!" sighed Celia. "I am afraid she will feel it very much."

"Why?" asked Mr. Gautier. "It can make no difference to her; she knows nothing of her father, nor he of her. There are no habits to break, no resignations in this case. I hope you will not encourage the girl in any morbid, selfish ideas, if she has them, at least."

"One-sided as ever," thought Celia; but she said, "You judge as a man, and men never can understand some things." Louis was silent.

"Any money?" asked the major, in an insinuating, off-hand way.

"Not a penny," answered Mr. Gautier. "A soldier, with a family of several children, has seldom a fortune to bestow with his daughters. However, Mrs. Hubbard assures all her friends that her girls are treasures in themselves."

"Hubbard!" ejaculated Celia, in dismay.

"What a dreadful name! What is the young lady's father?"

"General, no, Major-General Wolfe Hubbard."

"Ha!" I know," exclaimed Major Dashwood, producing his *Army List*, a perfect wonder of emendations and erasures. "Hubbard? here he is, promoted lately from D. A. G.—lost by his promotion, I imagine."

"Probably," said Louis; "but I do not understand army matters. You will be able to judge of the family for yourselves; for they all came home in the same ship with me, and they are going to settle in London."

Celia turned her deep blue eyes with such a speakingly inquisitive look on Louis, that the muscles of his grave mouth relaxed a little, and he replied to the gaze: "I am uncaught, I assure you; though both Miss Hubbard and Miss Emily are nightingales, and gentle and good-looking. Mrs. Hubbard quite counts on your good offices, Celia." How Mrs. Dashwood started as the familiar name fell so familiarly from her cousin's lips! it took her back at once to twelve years ago. "I heard something about your wish to get rid of Stella, and of Mrs. Hubbard having the charge." Celia had the grace to blush, when Major Dashwood looked at her, hummed and ha-haed, and to prevent his developing into speech, Celia said to Mr. Gautier, "Let us keep all this news from Stella to-night; let her sleep in peace," she pleaded. Mr. Gautier raised his eyebrows: he was surprized, but too polite or too indifferent to dissent or refuse.

CHAP. XII.—MR. GAUTIER OF SILVER HILL.

MR. GAUTIER was vastly mistaken if he supposed that Stella would take the same view of her father's marriage as he did, and consider that it made no difference to her, nor required any resignation from her. Stella had lately been full of projects of keeping papa's house, and remodelling the government of his slaves. She had been busy erecting a visionary church on Cedar Valley. She was to make such an Eden of her father's estates, that every planter in the island was to be led to emulate the good example. Stella had excellent Henry Martyn's life by heart, and entirely believed in the facility of making slaves, the offspring of slaves, into enlightened, self-denying Christians. She was to establish infant-

schools, and evening-schools for the adults. Papa was to distribute prizes. Many a gay and pleasant scene she conjured up; herself a presiding Lady Paramount in a romantic palm-thatched arbour under the shade of her paternal cedars, mocking-birds thrilling forth their loud, emphatic, thrush-like notes; humming-birds, with "gemmed frontlets, and necks of verdant green," "glancing like living jewels through the melodious air," kept cool by the waving of the broad plantain-leaves. Around her, eager, upturned, black faces, listening with delight to the words of peace and good-will to men. Stella, having read of such scenes, longed to realize the idea of a sort of angelic life. Papa was to be happy, the slaves happy, she the happy servant of all. Cousin Louis and his mother figured on the scene, but their parts had not been exactly traced out yet. Their characters and actions being transformed according to the author most in favour with the castle-builder at the time. And now down tumble builder and castle and all. Her father did not require her; Cedar Valley and the other estates had a Lady Paramount. Adieu to presiding in bowers or schools, and all hail to a step-mother; the certainty of being a Cinderella, and having no godnamamma to turn pumpkins into coaches, or mice into footmen. Poor Stella! She ran away and shut herself into her room to read the letter her father had indited to her on the happy subject. Mr. Joddrell called on his daughter to rejoice with him on the step he had taken; his bride was the most graceful, accomplished, and lovely of ladies. Stella must strive with all her might to become fit to be admitted into such society; it was a crowning grace to all the family, this new connection. Not one kind allusion to the lost mother of the daughter he was addressing: no interest shown in her for *herself* or *himself*, only on account of the stepmother. She must become mild and obedient; he was afraid she was neither, from Celia's wish that she should be sent to school. Here Stella's heart ached with a sudden sharp sting of bodily pain. "Cruel—cruel!" so she said to herself. "I wonder why I was born. I seem to have no right place in the world. I am in everyone's way, even auntie——" Here a gentle tap at her door interrupted the soliloquy. Stella hardened her heart and closed her ears to the sound. Another tap, and she heard auntie's voice, asking quite humbly for admission. To this Stella dared make no resistance; she opened the door and stood cold and tranquil before her aunt. Celia tried to meet

Stella's glance with a firm eye, but it was with a very pleading gesture that she laid her hand on her niece's arm. The weakness of her adversary was a potent appeal to the brave heart of the young girl. "Dear Stella! just listen to me patiently for one minute," and Mrs. Dashwood entered the fortress of Stella's chamber. "You must not exaggerate the change your father's marriage will make to you; as Louis says, it is not the trial it would have been, had you been brought up with your father; you can scarcely remember him, you know." The commonplace tone and words completely sobered down Stella's passion. A great power resides in polite mediocrity. How often it puts to flight a noble enthusiasm! Celia might go on now. "You'll find it a capital thing, dear, to have a motherly person to look after you when you go to Jamaica—a girl is always the better of some one to bear the responsibilities." As Mrs. Dashwood stopped, evidently, for an answer, Stella said, "Who knows?"

"What do you mean by 'Who knows?'" inquired Celia. "Of course you will go some day to your father, and she will have to take care of you till you are married; and I assure you it's a good, and not a bad business, your father having married again. It's an awful worry, child, when a father or mother has to be left alone." Celia was thinking of the harassing scenes she had gone through with *her* mother, on the occasion of her own marriage; and judging Stella by herself, supposed Stella would set her heart on being married young. "Oh! auntie, you do not understand;" Stella stopped abruptly.

"Yes, I do," said Celia, wagging her long bright curls. "But now, dear Stella, do say you will try not to be unhappy; it makes me so uncomfortable, and it will throw such a damp on our pleasure in Louis's visit."

"You *do* love me a little, auntie, don't you?" Stella questioned, in a sort of despair at this reasoning.

"I do, I do," cried Celia, kissing, and rocking her in her arms, with soft, dove-like, inarticulate murmurings. Celia was far better at coaxing than arguing. "You must not think because I proposed your being sent to school I did not love you."

"If you had only told me, auntie—it was such a cruel surprise."

"It was to save you unnecessary pain, my darling, and you see I was right, for you are not to go to school, only to stay

with Mrs. Hubbard, and she has two nice daughters, Louis says."

Deep, hard-drawn sighs, not like the sighs of a young girl, beat on Celia's ear. "Oh! Stella, do believe me; I do care for you, and if you had only needed finishing masters—but I have not the time, nor the strength——" here Mrs. Dashwood began actually to cry.

"I want to have something to comfort me when I leave you. Oh! auntie, to have no one to care for you really, the way fathers and mothers care for their children, not bearing even to think of parting with them—loving them right or wrong—never, never to know what a mother is! Do forgive me, auntie, if I am rough sometimes, it is that makes me so. I promise you I will not be sad; it is very difficult always to do right. Forgive me, auntie."

Celia was like a penitent child all that day towards Stella, and Mr. Gautier amused himself in watching the aunt and niece, deciding in his own mind that his dark-eyed, black-browed cousin had a temper of her own, and treated poor little Celia like a negro. The fair-haired, cherub-faced aunt had no chance, as he saw, with her tall niece, with a voice that was like the tone of a silver trumpet. Now Stella's grief, it must be owned, drew much of its poignancy from imagination, and such grief has a very different duration from that founded on reality. As she had never possessed the good she sighed over, so had she not lost it. Very different when we have losses that make positive gaps in our lives; when the dearest part of ourselves is wrenched away, and we are left bleeding and forlorn. There are trials worse than death—trials inflicted by man, not God, and for which we cannot console ourselves by kissing the rod that chastises us—finding comfort in performing the duty of resignation. But Stella knew nothing as yet of the sorrows of trust betrayed, or of love wronged. At sixteen the imagination has no divination in those directions; therefore, though she went to bed sad, there was no reason why she should rise sad. Her last thought ere sleep came had been: "They cannot put me out of the world;" her first waking one, that in cousin Louis she should find a stand-point. And with this belief there shot into her heart an ecstasy of joy, cloudless as the frosty sky on which her regardless eyes were fixed. She arranged her long thick hair with less of haste than usual; smoothed again and again its rebellious waviness, one of her

special beauties, but which, as it was rare, the young lady rashly concluded must be a defect. The musings of sixteen, full of harmonies who can describe? They are too evanescent for even the best of memories to recall. To breakfast then went Stella, with the resolve of making of Louis Gautier the confidant of her fears and perplexities relating to her father and her new connections, the Hubbards. Mr. Gautier was the last to appear in the breakfast-room, and while he was calmly and methodically eating his toast, Stella indulged in an examination of his countenance. The description of her favourite hero, Edgar Ravenswood, might serve for Louis. She remembered the very words. "His features were dark, regular, and full of majestic, though somewhat sullen expression. Some secret sorrow, or the brooding spirit of some moody passion, had quenched the light and ingenuous vivacity of youth in a countenance singularly fitted to display both, and it was not easy to gaze on the stranger without a secret impression either of pity or awe; or, at least, of doubt and curiosity allied to both." But such heroic-looking people are more attractive in fiction than in reality, and there dawned in Stella an idea that her cousin might be dangerous to meddle with. There was an inflexible look about his mouth, an absent expression in the eye, as of one accustomed to live among inferiors, more repelling than any mere sternness. But in looking up to answer some playful remark of Celia's, Louis smiled. That smile was exactly what was wanted to relieve Stella of her doubts. A smile in a dark face, the sun breaking from behind an inky cloud, are always two most successful effects; and Mr. Gautier's smile, though not lusciously sweet like that of Stapylton Smythe, was peculiarly agreeable, lighting up his eyes before banishing the rigid look of his lips. It was a genuine, frank, heart-born smile. Stella rushed at once from one extreme to the other, impetuously deciding that she should never be afraid of telling cousin Louis anything. She was so wonderfully comforted by this discovery, that she confided it to Celia in the course of a conversation they had about him that forenoon. "I suppose Louis is very clever?" so did Stella open the subject.

"Clever! what makes you think so?" inquired Celia, in some astonishment, as Louis had scarcely had time, had he been the "admirable Crichton" in person, to display any of his accomplishments.

"Because he has been sent to England to speak about Jamaica."

It had come to pass that in the September of the preceding year Mr. Huskisson had written his famous letter, which announced the rejection of what has since been called the "Disallowed Slave Act," and thus set the Jamaica House of Assembly into a blaze. But is not all this chronicled in the chronicles of the *Times*? Only a passing mention of such matters is necessary here, to make clear the cause of the voyages and travels of one of our personages. There had been objectionable clauses in this Slave Act, restricting religious worship and religious instruction among the slaves; a change from the government proposal of a slave protector to each parish, to a council of protection. For these reasons and others the new Slave Act had been "disallowed." The Jamaica House of Assembly was furious, the planters were furious, the slaves disappointed. Every party claimed to be in the right, and the small minority who saw the wrong and were desirous of having it redressed without calling in the aid of civil war, of course fell to the ground between the stools. To this small minority belonged Mr. Gautier, Stella's cousin Louis. At a meeting of influential liberal men, and such did actually exist even then in Jamaica, chiefly, it must be owned, among the clergy, lawyers, and physicians, it was decided to send a private deputation to England to plead the cause of the island in high places, and to try to find defenders in Great Britain, who, while upholding the rights of humanity and justice as regards the blacks, would also require that neither humanity nor justice should be forgotten towards the whites. Mr. Gautier being recognized as a favourable specimen of his class, and more at liberty to bestow a few months on the general weal than his professional friends, he with one other gentleman was chosen to represent the seven wise men of the community. This it was which had so unexpectedly brought cousin Louis to Waterloo Cottage, and made Stella ask if he were not "clever?" "Clever in a way," returned Celia: "very far from being accomplished, as is your friend Mr. Smythe."

"Mr. Smythe is not more my friend than he is yours, auntie," said Stella, briskly.

Celia laughed, and with her usual thoughtlessness said what she had better have left unsaid. "Oh! you little inconstant monkey!" Stella stared, looked grave, as if charged with a high misdemeanour, and replied: "No, I am sure I am not inconstant. I think one ought to like one's own cousin better

than a stranger, and I may admire a person's singing without being fond of that person."

"My dear, stupid child ! do not, for heaven's sake, use such strong expressions as 'fond,' when you are speaking of gentlemen. Where will people think you have been brought up ? Oh, Stella, Stella !" Stella was silent for a minute or two before she continued the conversation. "I do like Mr. Smythe in a way, auntie ; he is very amusing. It would be deceitful if I let you imagine I did not like him at all, only I could never feel as if I could make a friend of him, or ask his advice about anything of consequence, as I would Louis." "That's your opinion, is it ?" said Celia. "Louis is very well when he is pleased, but I should not advise you to make too many demands on his forbearance."

"Oh, auntie ! and his face when he smiles looks—looks like an apostle's."

"Stupid, stupid, enthusiastic child ! Now, Stella, will you believe me, that we used to think Louis had a bad temper ; if you ever see his eyes when he is angry, you will never forget them again."

Stella was obstinate in her own conviction. "Such a nice voice he has, and he speaks so evenly !"

"Evenly !" repeated Celia.

"Yes : he never seems hunting for the right word,—it comes. I watched that, when he was talking to uncle about Jamaica."

"You seem to have taken a good many observations ; but do not call him Louis, though he is your cousin ; he is too old to be treated as a playfellow,—he is double your age."

"Thirty-two !" exclaimed the literal Stella.

"Nearly ; but I won't be malicious, he is not quite thirty yet."

Desire a private interview with any one particular person residing in the same house with you, and whom you cannot with propriety pursue to his or her sleeping-chamber or hunt into your own, and you will promptly discover how difficult it is to secure a ten minutes, tête-à-tête. You think yourself tolerably sure from the known habits of the several individuals you are domiciled with, that at such and such a time they will be, as usual, out of your way. Only one member of the domestic circle remains between you and your point, but he or she loiters from some sudden inspiration of decorum or politeness—loiters, rousing your bile, till you are ready to

exclaim, "For the love of Heaven *do* go, and stand not on the order of your going!" Or else some maid-servant, who never before thought of needlework as coming within her avocations, is suddenly seized with an industrious fit, at the particular moment most inconvenient to you; or the footman, who every other day allows the fire to expire, remembers with equal fitness the necessity of attending to the state of the temperature in the drawing or dining room or study, exactly where he is not wished for. Who knows the great events such hindrances may have nipped in their budding time? But girls of sixteen are not easily turned from their purpose; the tenacity of childhood has not left them, to give place to the embarrassing little prejudices of young ladyhood. Girls of Stella's age are oftener fearless and wilful than shy or pliant. Speak to them, draw them out of their silence, and you will often have reason to be astonished at their boyish candour and straightforwardness. It was therefore sheer absence of opportunity that stood in the way of Stella's friendly confidences to Mr. Gautier. The first few days after his arrival at the cottage, when he stayed at home in the mornings, he remained shut up in his own room. In the evenings naturally all the family were assembled. During this period of waiting, Stella's admiration for her cousin was sensibly on the increase, and there really was something of the hero of romance about Louis's appearance. And his manner to women, whether young or old, was a manner belonging to the old French school. For one example: He rose from his seat every time Celia, or Aunt Philly, or even Stella came into the room, offering them a chair, or waiting till they were seated, before he resumed his own place. It may sound ridiculous to English ears, but it did not appear so. Stella was more abashed by this courtesy than she had ever been before by any action of man, and tried either to be beforehand in the room, or else waited till she could share the homage with one or other of the elder ladies. Mr. Gautier placed a footstool under old Miss Dashwood's inelegant feet with the same grave gallantry as under Celia's fairy slippers. Aunt Philly, who had never been the object of small attentions, very soon adored Mr. Gautier. She pronounced him to be a perfect gentleman; he very nearly caused the old woman to become a renegade to her party. "If all Jamaica people were like him," said Aunt Philly, when laughingly reproached by Celia for her partiality to a slave-owner, "there would be no occasion for emancipation."

CHAP. XIII.—A TETE-A-TETE.

ON the fifth afternoon since he had been a guest at the cottage, Mr. Gautier, returning from Major Dashwood's tailor, a preparatory step to paying some ceremonious and official visits, found Stella alone, practising on the piano. "Pray, go on," he said, "I am very fond of music."

"I cannot play well enough for any one to like to hear me," answered Stella.

"Shall we talk, then, and make acquaintance with one another?" said Louis. Stella went towards the fire where he was standing; he placed a chair for her, took another himself, much as they do at the theatre, and they sat down; but for a minute or two neither of them spoke. Stella at last made that hesitating sound which betrays an intention of speaking. "What were you going to say?" asked her cousin, smiling. Stella's courage came at once. She placed one of her hands over the other, pressing both on her knee, straightening her arms,—a most untutored but not ugly attitude,—and then said, "I should like to ask you about papa, Mr. Gautier."

"Very well, question me; but pray, why do you call me Mr. Gautier? it was Louis at first."

"Auntie said you might think me bold if I did."

"But indeed I should not. I liked the sound of Louis in your voice very much. If you are afraid of offending my dignity, call me cousin Louis."

"I am not afraid of you at all," said Stella, looking at him; "it makes *such* a difference when a person is your own relation." This was said in a tone of affection which touched Mr. Gautier.

"How came you to recollect me?" he inquired. "You were scarcely more than a baby when you saw me before."

"I knew it was you from the picture in the study."

"In spite of this growth?" touching his great black whiskers.

"The eyes are the same, and altogether you are like it still."

"You are a sharp observer. Now what do you wish to ask me about your papa?" Out it came with a burst. "Oh, cousin! I cannot bear his being married again."

"That is perhaps natural as a first feeling," answered Louis. "A prejudice against stepmothers has been sown broadcast

in the world; I hope it is only some nonsensical hearsay of that kind which troubles my young cousin?"

"I meant to be a comfort to papa, and do so much good!" said Stella, in a low voice, with a perceptible quavering in it.

"Of course you did, like a good little girl. You had planned one duty for yourself, and now you find that one of another kind is designed for you, *and you will fulfil that.*"

Louis spoke in a cheerful, decided tone. He received no answer, and was aware that the muscles round Stella's delicate child's mouth were tremulous to an alarming degree. "I will tell you of lessons I have legrned, little cousin. We all begin by supposing we have a choice as to how our lives shall be parcelled out and spent. Alas! no—yet why, alas? It is better to obey necessity: it spares us much regret at our own shortsightedness. Things are of two kinds in this world of ours, Stella; some are in our own power—others not. Our opinions, our affections, our dislikes, these we can rule; but if you wish to infringe on what is in the power of others to dispute with you, my poor child, you will be constantly in trouble, and complaining alike of gods and men." Louis had risen, and was standing with his peculiarly erect carriage before the seated Stella. She did not quite seize his meaning, but as he paused, she thought she must make a reply. Reverently, and rather timidly, she said: "I might complain of men, cousin, but never of God."

"I said the gods, Stella, for indeed I was quoting from a fine old Greck. I fancy you have a stout enough spirit to do battle with any of your rebellious feelings, or I should hot talk thus with you. If you only aim at governing that which is in your own power, you will never strive in vain, and no one can hinder or hurt you." Stella was very much honoured indeed by her grand-looking cousin's conversing in so high a strain with her, though not very certain about her stout spirit, for she was feeling more forlorn than before he began his consolation; she made sure he must be right, it was his immeasurable superiority which placed her too far away from him, poor ignorant child as she was. Louis was scrutinizing her face as she sat before him. He was given to probing the characters and motives of others, addicted to digging down to the very foundations of their being; not the happiest habit for those who wish to preserve their philosophical calm. Besides, pride in our penetrating powers is one of the Evil

One's temptations. "Judge not, that ye be not judged." Why is it that this injunction, which carries in it so direct a promise of retribution to ourselves—why is it so constantly disobeyed? Mr. Gautier had a most lively faith in his power to read the mind's construction in the face. "Now," went on Louis, as if guided by a perception of Stella's inmost thoughts, "if you had made up your mind to be an heiress, that was just one of the things which did not depend on you; in short, not in your power to realize." Stella's fine eyes here opened on the speaker with the untroubled gaze of wonder; then, as she gathered his meaning, they flashed on him, and she burst out with, "I never thought of such a thing; I only wanted papa's love."

Mr. Gautier was unyielding. "His having a wife will not prevent that. Do not you see what a selfish love yours is? Tell me, how often have you, when enjoying music and books in the midst of cheerful society, as I found you, for instance, on the night I arrived, how often have you thought of your father, perhaps pining in solitude?"

"I know how bad it was at Evian," remarked Stella, with a sigh of self-reproach for not having sympathized with her father.

Louis thought, "What a stiff-necked girl!" mistaking her meaning. She interested him, however; she was quaint, and not a mere echo.

"Yes," he said, "I daresay it was very sad for you at Evian; but does your suffering give you any right to exact payment in kind from others? You must, as a duty, begin at once to combat any aversion you have conceived against a lady, merely because she is your father's wife. Learn to forget yourself, devote yourself, sacrifice yourself; that is the law set up, not by man, but proclaimed by God."

Stella understood him now; a soft blush rose in her cheek, her eye glistened with a chivalrous ardour, as when one listens to the spirit-stirring strains of martial music. "I *will* try, cousin Louis," and her heart bounded at his words.

"Honour bright?" he asked, looking down at her, his face and voice softened.

"Honour bright," she repeated, firmly.

"You will succeed," he said. "You remind me too much of one superior to all her sex, not to have some of her good qualities."

"Am I like your mamma, cousin Louis?"

"Not at all: your resemblance is to my mother's adopted daughter, and your mother's sister." The waning light was still sufficient to let Mr. Gautier's piercing eyes perceive the sudden falling of his young cousin's face. "A slight family resemblance," continued Louis, "that you may be proud of, to the best of women." He spoke in a voice more than sufficiently stern. Louis had spoken so loudly, both he and his companion were so interested in their conversation, that neither had noticed a ring of the door-bell.

"That is a daring assertion to make of one lady to another," said Mr. Stapylton Smythe's agreeable voice. Mr. Smythe had abstained from his evening visits to the cottage since Mr. Gautier's arrival; had indeed only called once to leave a card for that gentleman. With Mr. Smythe were Celia and Mrs. Hood; Mrs. Harriette having come to have a look at the Caribbean savage, as she designated Mr. Gautier. Stella was sorry for the interruption; she had hoped to hear more of that family story which her grandmother had held as a threat over her head, and her aunt as a reproach. Mr. Gautier had a repartee on his lips, but he was one of those men too reserved to enter into a war of wit; so he only replied drily, "You rate women very low."

"Thank you, Mr. Gautier," cried out Mrs. Hood. "I always judge of men's own calibre by the way they speak of women."

"Perhaps my favourable judgment arises from my small experience," returned Louis; "but I owe all the happiness of my life to two noble devoted women." There was no call for this avowal. Why did Louis make it? Did you ever, reader, remark how some secret consciousness provokes your or your neighbour's unnecessary candour? "One too many," laughed Mrs. Hood. Then in that flute-like, innocent voice, which Celia knew meant mischief, Harriette went on. "I did not know Mr. Gautier was married."

"No more he is," exclaimed Stella.

Celia was twisting her brains how to change the subject, for she dreaded Louis's explanations of his family arrangements, which would be unhesitatingly given if Mrs. Hood continued her cunning attacks. The revelation of her brother's Spanish connections seemed imminent, and the only diversion she could think of was ringing the bell for lights. Pompey brought in candles, and Mrs. Dashwood then ordered coals. No use: Harriette was not to be diverted. "What a charm-

ing, romantic country Jamaica must be !” sighed Mrs. Hood. “Do you know I have often thought that if I were ever single again, I would always be *just* on the point of marrying—never going further.”

“My dear Hatty !” said Celia, reprovingly.

“Just ask Mr. Gautier or Mr. Smythe, if it is not the stage of life most conducive to felicity.”

Mr Smythe laughed and Mr. Gautier frowned. Louis did not understand persiflage. To Celia’s indignation he continued the subject, saying seriously, “There is no courtship in my case.” Mrs. Hood smiled, as persons do who have had enough of one topic, or who are thinking of something else. She was, in fact, trying to hear what Mr. Smythe was saying to Stella; and though his back was turned, she knew as well by the tones of his voice as if she had seen him, that he was using his sweetest smile. Mr. Smythe was asking Stella if she could let him have a small MS. music book he had brought her on some occasion. He was informing Stella, in the same little lover-like whisper, that he had met with a charming young widow, a most accomplished *artiste*, to whom he had promised to take these unprinted treasures of his travels. Stella most actively searched the music-stand, casually wondering what singing had to do with an artist. Though well enough acquainted with French, Stella was not yet mistress of this technical designation applied to musicians. Mr. Smythe saw Stella’s untroubled mien, but both the penetrating ones, Mrs. Hood and Mr. Gautier, were led into error. “Don’t you think the climate and customs of Jamaica would suit Mr. Smythe very well ?” asked Harriette, pointedly, of Mr. Gautier.

Mr. Smythe turned round at this, saying, “I never thought of it before, but really, Mrs. Hood, your idea is not a bad one. I think I will try for the post of protector of slaves—it is a taking title. There are to be such appointments, are there not, Mr. Gautier ? And if not, why should I not grow vines there, and sit under their shade ? Miss Joddrell, you will patronise me, I hope, if we should meet in a Spanish town assembly ? I was very civil to you, you know, at your first English party. Before the speech ended, Mr. Gautier had slipped out of the room.

“How could I patronise you ?” asked Stella.

“I am afraid you will soon be taught your power,” returned Mr. Smythe, with a glance that had in it a little regret.

"Good-by, Celia," said Mrs. Hood. "I like your **cousin** Gautier. He has a stiff sturdiness that one learns by experience to prefer to insidious elegance and all that humbug. If his clothes were better made, the man would be handsome. Ta—ta." She pinched Stella's cheek as she passed, saying, "Little fool."

CHAP. XIV.—LETTERS.

Louis Gautier to the Ladies of Silver Hill.

"Waterloo Cottage, February 6th, 1828.

"MY DEAR MAMAN—MY DEAR OLYMPIA,—In England only forty-eight hours, and you see I am already writing to you. A good sign! Apparently, the indolence of which you were afraid, and to the existence of which I so humbly agreed, is not an incurable evil. We had an excellent passage; no cold to speak of in the Channel, no adventure, no misfortune. Do I need to tell you how often I have thought of home, or that whether watching the magnificent spectacle of the sun sinking beneath the boundary line of heaven and earth, or lying sleepless at night, listening to the restless waters around me, or forced into companionship by my shipmates, still I was with you in spirit. Verily, the pleasures of travelling can exist only for those who have no strong affections. Immediately on my arrival in London, I went to Messrs. Holden and Van Voorst for funds. A clerk presented me with a letter. It was addressed in your handwriting, Olympia. I was not in the least surprised. Do you not possess more than any other living being I know, the genius of goodness. You have divined every feeling I should experience on finding myself in London—terrible London! You tell me to trust to your care of my mother. I do trust to your care, my dear friend, more even than to my own Maman. You are the saint to whom I pray. What a lucky fellow I am to have not only a noble mother, but a faithful, disinterested friend. Two such affections make life blessed in spite of its trials and bereavements, its blunders and difficulties. I believe that I replied categorically enough to Mr. Holden, and altogether behaved like a man in his senses; but I shook with impatience to break the seal of my letter. In spite of my wishes, it was

evening before I could reach Waterloo Cottage. I guessed that Mrs. Dashwood and Stella Joddrell must be anxious for news from Cedar Valley, so I decided on trampling on conventionality, and, in right of cousinhood, rang at their gate bell at ten o'clock at night. The servant, old Pompey, recollected me directly; these blacks have the memory and instincts of spaniels. The old fellow nearly threw himself at my feet, and grinned so, that he could not pronounce my name when he ushered me into the drawing-room. Coming out of a half obscurity, the sudden glare of light dazzled me; I fancied I had tumbled into a tea-party, the room seemed so full of people. I recognized Celia's long golden curls at once; but she did not return the compliment; on the contrary, her blue eyes opened wide with wonder as they fell on me. Suddenly I heard Olympia's voice—that clear, ringing voice—crying out, “It is Louis, it is cousin Louis.” A tall, slim girl started forward, and forced her hand into mine. This was your niece, Olympia, so she had a fair right to your voice. I could not consider it sacrilege. I found out afterwards that Stella had guessed who I was from a likeness taken of me before I was twenty, and which Celia had preserved. My identity ascertained, there was no lack of greeting, nor of kindly welcome; in short, there was no satisfying the hospitable instincts of my connections, until I agreed to take up my quarters with them. I argued that my luggage was still in the ship, that I had only a small valise with me, that I was unfit to appear in fashionable society; all my excuses were overruled, and here, in despite of a pre-determination to enjoy the liberty of a lodging of my own, I am definitively established. Man proposes, but woman disposes, for it was the ladies who were so strenuous. The attention bestowed on me is often a constraint. I am ungrateful enough to have the inclination to cry out, “Not so much zeal, for the love of heaven, ladies.” Celia, I must tell you, looks nearly as young and quite as pretty as she did ten years ago. Though fully thirty, she might still play the young girl in a white frock. Not a line, not a ruffle on her satin skin: her lips are red, smooth, and smiling; her eyes retain their former diamond lustre; her hair is as glossy and abundant as ever. I confess (misanthrope that I am) the sight is not one pleasing to me. Life's rude apprenticeship ought to leave some traces behind it. We should augur but ill of a workman whose hands did not bear true witness to his

toil. Major Dashwood has progressed into a portly middle-aged gentleman; and his aunt is a stout, red-faced, silent old gentlewoman. Celia has candidly bid me seek the good offices of a London tailor; clothes of a different shape from the prevailing mode are sufficient, I see, to make a sensible man ridiculous, so I must lose no time.

"*10th February.*—On the evening of my arrival I was formally introduced to a Mr. Smith—I beg his pardon, Mr. Stapylton Smythe, as I see by the card he left to-day for me. Strange that the first acquaintance I make in England *should* bear that odious name—Smith or Smythe; they come from the same root. The gentleman is quite at home in this family, and I can see that Celia wants us to be friends. Either because of that, or of his name, or the combination of the two causes, I feel a prejudice springing up, full-grown and lively, against this agreeable friend of the family. He is a favourite with them all, except with old Aunt Philly. Celia and I have some sentimental conversations—particularly when I come back from London disappointed in the errand that took me there. She tries to console me for what I begin to consider a wild-goose chase, by assuring me that I am vastly improved from what I was; worth twice as much as when we parted. Eheu! Occasionally, she tells me some of her troubles and disappointments. After all, she is a sweet creature, obliging and sound at heart. I could tell you now things very honourable to her. Pity it is that she had not fallen into the hands of a superior man! He would have filled up the good outlines of her character. I was too harsh in my judgment of her. It is not the modest rivulet's fault that you can see every grain of sand over which its inch-deep waters murmur along. It freshens many and many a blade of grass, that would else have withered. God, who has created the great ocean for its uses, created also the small rivulet for some good end. Celia has, however, one great want in my eyes: she has never received the baptism of suffering. I do not think that you, Olympia, know that Celia was the object of my first passion—a youth's fierce, intolerant, exacting passion. I wonder, had her mother not interfered between us, if the fire would have burned steadily on, or burned out, leaving us each with cold gray ashes, for all the interest of the great capital embarked?

"*Thursday night.*—The more I see of men and things here, the faster do my hopes of any reasonable settlement of the

most arduous question of slavery dwindle away. A compromise might be easily effected, at least I believe so, but compromise implies mutual concession; and party spirit runs too high on both sides to admit of any yielding. It is a sad spectacle, I assure you, to see passions paramount where principle ought to prevail, and poor coterie interest substituted for the eternal rights of justice and humanity. A man of moderation, as I am by nature and habit, cast into this heated medium, is just like the earthen pot among the iron ones of the fable, and quite as sure of being broken. My colleagues in the deputation look coldly upon me already, and so do the Abolitionists, for the simple reason that I refuse to go the lengths of either; and I expect soon to be stigmatized as a renegade. Let it be so. At my time of life, a man knows that parties are exclusive and intolerant. An old school line says: '*Amicus Plato, sed magis amica veritas.*' So long as I am at peace with my conscience, what matters the rest? The windows of the pretty room allotted to me look into the garden: they might as well look into the street, or anywhere else, for all I can see from them in general is a thick fog. My soul was untuned by yesterday's labours. I struggled out this morning to try and shake off the gloom I felt creeping into my soul. The only object of interest I came across was a solitary cow reposing tranquilly on a small mound, and receiving that falling mist with admirable stoicism. The poor cow set a good example to the vexed man. I determined to be resigned to my fate. I hailed a passing hackney-coach, and went to—where do you think?—to the Major's tailor. On my return home, hearing the sound of the piano, I opened the drawing-room door, and found Stella alone. She declined playing to me, so we sat down by the fire to talk. She is the completest specimen you can imagine of a transition state—of the child becoming a woman; it is difficult to treat her as either the one or the other. She is both brusque and sensitive, fearless and timid; her eyes, by-the-by, are not black, like those of Olympia, but gray with brown in them, and they are encased in the longest, thickest, blackest lashes I ever saw, which makes them look black at night. She spoke to me of her father's marriage in a tone of morbid feeling, unpalatable to me. I did not handle this sort of disease very tenderly; but my reproofs were received without the flow of tears which I had expected. On the contrary, I was listened to with attention, almost with respect, except

when I proceeded to hint at the possibility of her regretting her heiress-ship; then the humble expression of the large eyes changed to a haughty flash, and the girlish figure took a womanly, rebuking attitude. We did not come to the good understanding I think we should have done, because our *tête-à-tête* was interrupted by Celia's entrance, accompanied by her present bosom friend, a Mrs. Hood, and that same Mr. Smythe. I wonder who he is, and what he is about among these ladies?

* * * * *

"I have found it materially impossible to follow up my plan of keeping a regular journal for you. Celia considers me as her property—as a kind of country cousin—and carries me to exhibitions and sights, forces me into paying morning visits and going to dinner parties. Yesterday we dined with the Hoods, who have a very fine house near this. Mr. Smythe was there, and a most powerful magnetic current of antipathy is now established between that gentleman and me. Both of you know that I am unfortunately a Sybarite in some things, for many the lecture Olympia has bestowed on me for allowing the little miseries of life, and the contact of obnoxious persons, such as one is sure to meet at every turn of the road, to take such a hold of me. It is the nature of the animal, I suppose. Strange, also, how commonly shyness is mistaken for haughtiness! The two young daughters of our hostess, pretty girls with ringlets, came down from the school-room in the evening. We played at various games by way of amusing the young people; among others, at forfeits. I did my best to be agreeable. When it came to Mrs. Hood's turn, her penance was to find a fault or a good quality for every one present. She scanned me for an instant, then pronounced that 'I was too high for the company I was in.' Rather to my surprise, Stella seemed ready to applaud the sentiment. Surely, I have not made the child into my enemy? It would be unfair, for I confess that Stella is the only creature, not even excepting you, Olympia, my good, kind friend, with whom in the first meeting I ever felt perfectly at my ease. I have dined at several other houses; but I find that wherever I go the conversation rolls round a very limited circle. Try to detach it from its accustomed route, and you find yourself left alone. Perhaps others would make a similar remark were they transported to Silver Hill. But what a change all this is to me, from the ease of our evenings there, where there was no occa-

sion for explanation,—where subject followed subject as much without confusion as without prejudice or pretension. Since I have been in England, I have got into the habit of talking of one thing while thinking of another. Very often my words sound to me as if they were being spoken by some one else, so completely do I echo the conventionality of my neighbour on the right hand and the left. Another element of my loneliness here is, that I have no one to whom I can talk with any chance of being understood, of either my noble mother or my noble friend; Stella, perhaps, were she some years older. The fact is, English people do not understand friendship: they acknowledge the ties of relationship—they decline any other. Poor little Celia complains of this; people are always asking what relation Mrs. Hood is to her.

* * * * *

“She is a strange child, this cousin Stella of mine, this niece of Olympia’s; I never saw in any one such a respect for life. She cannot endure seeing an insect destroyed. None are repulsive to her. She appears literally without an idea that any living thing can be disgusting. This morning when she saw Mr. Smythe put his foot on a spider, she gave a cry, and a look of anger and dislike appeared on her face. Celia, who has a shrinking horror of every crawling thing, called Stella unnatural and foolish; Stella scarcely ever defends herself from Celia’s reproaches or remarks. She seems to consider ‘pretty auntie’—her way of describing Mrs. Dashwood—as an Indian savage does his idol. It may do any harm or evil, and still be blindly worshipped. Some natures have this aptitude for devotion, *quand même*.

“*Saturday*.—Packet-day at last approaches. A whole month has passed without the power of sending you a line. The mail from Jamaica, I am told, is due next week, but it always arrives just too late to send answers by the outward-bound packet. This information makes me feel more sad and discouraged than usual. Whatever the news of my mother, dear Maman, or of you, Olympia, I shall be able to give no sign of sympathy, no word of advice, for six mortal weeks! Day after day one hears moralizing about the shortness and uncertainties of life; but of what avail our assent to the preacher’s words? Who bears separation the better for being conscious that it is no uncommon occurrence, that it is only what falls to the lot of every creature of woman born? How many who have pressed each other’s hands in the

certainly of the morrow's meeting, have never again met here below ! Separated from my dearest by a wide ocean, which takes a month and a half to traverse ! I wonder at my own serenity. My placidity is sometimes troubled by a vision of Olympia, contending alone with the difficulties of managing the negroes ; in any trouble apply for advice or assistance to Dr. McNiel. He is less likely to resort to severe measures than my cousin of Cedar Valley. Has the bride been to visit you ? If not, make no advances. Remember my advice to keep Maurice at a distance : he is a clever fellow, but encroaching. As I write these words, my present powerlessness to be of use to you in any strait makes this absence too trying. I shall push hard for such an interview with the great man as shall allow me to fix the time of my leaving England.

" *28th February.*—Yesterday I and my colleagues had an interview with Mr. Blank ; satisfactory in so far as an interview with a clever, far-seeing, just-minded man must be to the oppressed. The interest he showed in our subject is valuable, coming from one so every way superior, but as for any chance of staving off the ruin of the West Indies, that is as likely as my squaring the circle. The punishment of the children for the sins of the father is at hand, believe me. The popular ignorance here about the colonies, and the popular excitement about the black race, coupled with the pig-headedness in Jamaica, will speedily bring about the sacrifice. Benevolence will be misapplied : the rights of thousands of innocent whites will be recklessly destroyed, while any kind of progress among the blacks will be arrested for generations to come. The leadership of both parties has fallen to the hottest and blindest partisans, and the first consequence is, our retracing our steps to the old law of 1816, back to absolute power ; and when did despotism fail to lead to oppression ? We do not need to make a voyage to the West Indies to find that out. I am uneasy about Maurice ; he will resent the withdrawal of the privileges so lately conceded to his race. Meddle with him as little as possible.

" *March 1st.*—We have seen nothing of General Hubbard, or his family. I begin to wish for their appearance—guess why ? Nothing less than to see my young cousin Stella out of this house, under the protection of the fiery little soldier, and some motherly person to watch over her. Queer as she is, Mrs. Hubbard is a better guide than such a thoughtless

creature as pretty Celia. Mrs. Hood would willingly have opened my eyes, had they required opening, to the fluttering of this gaudy butterfly, Mr. Smythe, about our half-opened flower. I have thought once or twice of giving this child-woman, Stella, some advice, but to tell the truth, I have not the courage. Poor little girl! she has never been in the normal condition designed for all human beings at the beginning of their lives; she has no recollection of a father's caress, or of a mother's kiss. Just at the age to require all the bulwarks of parental protection, she is sent like a shuttlecock from stranger to stranger. Luckily nature has gifted her with a brave spirit, there is no cowardice about her. More women do wrong from timidity than from evil impulse. Breathing an air thick with conventionalities, Stella does not imbibe them—does not even perceive their existence. Celia says she is too much of a savage as yet to understand their necessity. A fine necessity, indeed! I confess that her manner is a little too uncombed, but her untamed ways are more like those of a bird newly caught, than proceeding from any innate roughness. She has at times a sort of inspired Joan d'Arc expression, that must be the emanation of a noble soul. Could I paint, I would make a picture of her for you, taken in the attitude she naturally falls into when listening to anything that awakens her interest. Her cheek, looking pale against the masses of her dark hair, lightly pressed on her girlish hand; her dreamy eyes, where the light of womanhood begins to dawn, contrasting with a serious, but still a child's mouth. Once at some story of heroic self-sacrifice, I saw her flash and thrill as if her whole being vibrated with sympathy, just as I have seen the ocean's expanse turn to crimson and seem to heave with joy under the touch of the glorious day-star. You can understand my sensations, those of any man of right feeling, when he sees a blight preparing to fall on some noble lily's bosom, about to destroy all its gracious promise. As yet Stella is unconscious of the nature of Mr. Smythe's sentiments and attentions; but how long can she remain so? and Celia is not the woman to ward off a bad influence and keep the knowledge of evil to herself. I am inclined to go and find Mrs. Hubbard myself. If Stella ever goes to Jamaica, we must adopt her. Olympia, you will be to her the mother she has never known; she is worthy of being your pupil.

“Thursday evening.—What a pleasure! the first object that met my eyes on my return this afternoon from a tedious

day of disappointment in London, was Stella waiting at the garden gate in a bitter east wind. As soon as she caught sight of me, she shouted at the top of her voice, 'Good news! glorious news! two Jamaica letters, cousin Louis,' waving them as she spoke high in the air.

"Two letters, did she say? Two hymns! What have I ever done to merit so much affection from two beings so superior to me in heart and mind as Maman and Olympia?"



CHAP. XV.—SPRING BUDS OPEN.

MR. GAUTIER had been six weeks an inmate of Waterloo Cottage when Stella waved before his eyes, as banners of joy, the two Jamaica letters. The address on the one was written by feeble, uncertain fingers; on the other, every letter was clear and firm as print, yet delicate and minute: you would have said at once that it had been a labour of love. Stella had admired this writing, wondered over it, and then contrasted it with her own miserable, rough, unshapely penmanship. She had taken possession of the letters, her cousin having gone out earlier than usual to wait on an influential M.P., believed to favour the West Indian interest. Stella had been busy and preoccupied with these letters all day: first, she placed them conspicuously on the head of the bronze statuette paper-weight on Mr. Gautier's writing-table, going in and out of the room to make sure of the striking effect of her arrangement. She knew how these letters had been longed for, so much so that she had often lately felt, when fancying her cousin more than usually dull and depressed, that she would have braved fire and water to bring back cheerfulness to his eyes. The more cousin Stella sympathized, the less, however, could cousin Louis divine the strength of her sympathy, for it made her as brooding and silent as himself. On the contrary, he set down this change in her spirits, this shade on her brow, this abstraction in her manner, to Mr. Smythe's account. Mr. Gautier was sorry to think this, nay, he was grieved; there was a feeling also of disappointment in his mind. Under his taciturnity lay a heroic, chivalrous nature, which had instinctively recognized a counterpart in young Stella Joddrell, and he had dwelt on the discovery with an emotion of pleasure (we must call it for want of a better

word) such as a man of science may experience in arriving at some rare and precious result. It would seem that one of the great interests of life is that of exercising our penetrative faculty,—of trying to pierce through the visible into the invisible; we none of us are willing to rest satisfied with what is only external. Yet from the girl scrutinizing her lover, and the youthful poet, up to the philosopher and the divine, all are held equally in suspense by their misinterpretations of the unseen by the seen. Louis Gautier, the man of experience, was to be no exception to the rule. As yet, however, Stella had proposed to herself no problems about cousin Louis. To her, he was the demonstration of a hero; he and his prototype Ravenswood, one entire chrysolite. As the timepiece in the drawing-room marked the fourth hour of this afternoon in March, Stella once more raced up to Mr. Gautier's room: her patience was worn out; the letters, seen so often on the head of the statuette, no longer looked effective; she snatched them off, and oscillated between the hall-door and the garden-gate, until she descried his tall, upright figure approaching.

In spite of north winds and east winds, it was spring; buds were opening on trees and hedges; tender green leaves, the heralds of flowers, the heralds of fruitful harvests of many kinds, were rousing the earth from her winter's sleep. On this particular afternoon the sun was bright, the air full of joyous sounds, the sky very blue, most intensely blue, wherever the white fleecy clouds were battling for a place. A great long ray of the declining sun came and lighted on Stella, as she held up the letters to her cousin; she stood before that dark cousin, "a very shower of beauty, her face with gladness overspread, soft smiles by human kindness bred," playing over mouth and cheeks. Louis only seemed, however, to perceive the letters she offered; he seized them and hastened to his own room. There he devoured the contents, thanked God for the safety of those so dear to him, felt his heart full as with new wine, sought out certain passages to re-read, had an impulse to pack his portmanteau and try to catch the next day's outward-bound packet, and sail back without delay to his Lares and Penates; sighed a little; and, finally, added the concluding lines to his journal, given in the last chapter, and obeyed the summons to dinner. In the meanwhile Stella's joy was overshadowed; she had been so exceedingly glad for cousin Louis's sake, and he had not even

said one word to the harbinger of good tidings. In smoothing her hair, tossed and ruffled by that sharp March wind which had met her at the garden-gate, she saw that her eyes were glistening. The boisterous March wind was not to blame for this; there are omissions in our kindness to one another, keener, more chilling, than even a north-east wind. People made a common remark that year, as indeed they do most years, that "spring was late." The buds on trees and hedges had grown rounder and redder, bright suns had warmed them, birds had called impatiently to them, "It is time to open," but no unfolding had followed the sun's darts or the birds' call. The buds had waited for the one particular fore-ordained hour; when that came, without any perceptible difference in it from the hour gone by, they had spread open and showed their tender beauty. Let the same bleak gusts blow on the morrow, or the next day, as had shaken branch and new-sprung stem the week before; let whirlwinds of dust arise, or pitiless sleet fall down, the buds can never more roll up their tender leaves and be buds again. Bud of tree and flower, human heart in the bud, once open into full life, there will be no shrinking back for you into the calyx in which you lay so calm, in ignorance of the bitter hazards awaiting your blossoming, blighting your prime, dogging your decay. It was the day after she had given the Jamaica letters to Mr. Gautier that Stella found him alone in Celia's study, reading. With his usual courtesy he rose, placed a chair for her by the side of the fire. Sitting down by his side she said to him, after a minute or two of silence, during which he had resumed his reading—"It will be a long time, I fancy, cousin Louis, before you will let me rank as a friend?" Mr. Gautier looked up surprised, laid aside his book, and answered gravely, "Life is too short to waste it in apprenticeships. I see no reason why I should not consider you as a friend."

"I don't mean just a common everyday friend," said Stella, very earnestly, "but one like—like what your mother's adopted daughter is to you."

Louis, with the same seriousness as before, replied—"When you know that excellent woman, you will be able to judge how much you ask."

Stella's heart swelled as it had never swelled before. "I am only a girl, I know; but I could be a good friend. Try me, cousin Louis."

This time Mr. Gautier smiled as he looked into the depths of the eyes gazing on him. Very few human eyes have that expression of honest faithfulness in them, but you may see the look any day in your dog's eyes, when they are watching for your withheld caress. "So be it," said Mr. Gautier. "We will sign a contract of friendship immediately: and now, remember, you must tell me all your secrets."

"And you?" asked Stella, anxiously.

"Of course," he laughed.

"But I am in earnest, cousin Louis," said Stella, imploringly.

"Are you, indeed? Do you not understand, Stella, that friendship and confidence (one and the same thing they ought to be) must be won? They cannot be given, as one gives a flower to a young lady."

"I don't know that," said Stella, stoutly. "I have given you mine, and you have done nothing to win my friendship. If I had any secrets I could tell them to you sooner than to any one I ever knew in all my life, and I could tell you what I feel. I want some one to help me, for sometimes I think I have very bad feelings."

The child-like eyes were still fixed confidently on Mr. Gautier. He did not respond to the offer; his impulse was to repel it: so, passing over the last part of Stella's speech, he replied to the first—"You are very young and very inexperienced. Friendship and confidence are nothing but vague, meaningless expressions in your child's mouth. At my age they are stern realities, comprising stern duties." Very stern and not very attractive if they resembled Mr. Gautier at that time of speaking. He took up his book, and, as Stella remained silent, recommenced reading. Presently she interrupted him with the question, "What did that lady do to gain your friendship and confidence?"

"She has given years of unsparing devotion to my mother, years of disinterested aid and sympathy to me."

"I can do the same, cousin Louis. I am your relation, and she is not even that," said Stella, with unshrinking ignorance.

"My dear cousin, do you know this is very unaccountable talk?" Louis was stopped by the great blush that overspread Stella's face and throat, a blush that tingled down to her finger tips. What was it in Louis's tone, or words, or look, that thus awoke for the first time in that young being the shamefacedness of a woman? His young cousin's deep,

painful flush made Louis's colour rise also, from a keen sensation of self-reproach. He made a quick diversion, however, by saying—"What is the reason you speak of your mother's sister as merely *that* lady?"

"I never heard of her until lately, and then by no name," said Stella, embarrassed.

"Could you not have called her *Aunt*?"

"I have no wish to do so, cousin Louis," was the unhesitating answer, but in a low voice.

"Now, then, give me your first proof of the confidence you say you feel in me." Mr. Gautier's flush had vanished, he looked now pale, as well as stern. "You have probably heard some silly, idle reports from persons either ignorant of the truth or else mischievously inclined. Set aside as untrue whatever you may have heard, and believe my simple assurance, the assurance of a man who despises big words, that your aunt Olympia is as much the superior of every one you have hitherto known as the heavens are above the earth. She is a pure, transparent vase, full to the brim of benevolence and long-suffering." Stella's eyes were on the ground, but Louis saw the muscles round her lips quivering: his voice softened. "Love and respect her now for my sake, will you?" he said. "When you once know her, there will be no need of constraint."

"What is her name?" asked Stella.

"Olympia Gautier."

"That is not her real name. Why does she use any other than her own, cousin Louis? Why is she not called by her husband's name, for I know she is married?" questioned Stella, impetuously.

"For excellent reasons not convenient to give to you. I will confide in you so far, Stella, as to tell you, that if ever I come across her husband, it will be a death struggle between us; if ever he attempts to see her again, he shall find me in his path."

As Mr. Gautier spoke, his eyes darted flashes of fiery light; the large lids opened back, showing the white all round the irids—he was terrible to behold. Stella remained silent, though her half-opened lips seemed to form words which she had no voice to utter. The troubled expression of her face was that of one on the borders of delirium. Her look and his look crossed. Louis was rather startled by the strange glance meeting his, but his anger overpowered his fear. "Well?"

he exclaimed, in the tone of one forcing his enemy at the sword's point to cry for quarter, "well?" Stella looked, without quailing, into his fierce face, and said, "I hate her, cousin Louis : you have made me hate her !" And then the girl turned away and left him. She went to her own room, and there, with flushed cheeks and clay-cold hands, quaked and trembled, and in that hot flush, accompanied by quailing and trembling, her child's heart burst from the bud. Mr. Gautier, left alone, tried to settle himself to his book again, but he could not banish Stella's angry face from the pages. "Nature will prevail," he mused ; "the passionate Moorish blood speaks out in her, spite of her cold grandmother's stern training and her frivolous aunt's example." Mr. Gautier felt the want of discussing this subject, as indeed he did every other, with Olympia, his friend and adopted sister ; he mused on the blank in his life her absence created. Had this guardian angel been by his side, however, it is probable our friend Louis would not have been able clearly to explain the exact state of his mind about his wilful young cousin. He had been excessively and unreasonably angry at her hesitation in acknowledging her mother's sister, and yet the broad statement of hatred which followed had somehow left him softened. His Mentor might have guessed the gradations of her *Tele-machus'* feelings, but certainly not from the clearness of the explanations he could have afforded her.

Try to paint with the finest colours painter's palette can hold, a blue misty distance, athwart which slants a ray of yellow light. You see the church-spire, it glitters, and so do the windows and the metal-bound roof : beneath and around the house of God are grouped dwellings ; the river glances here and there like a silver ribbon, cattle dot the pasture. Try to give the mingling of that ideal and real so strongly exciting your divine and human sympathies, and you turn away baffled from the effort you have made. Objects are either too defined, press too materially forward, or else are blurred, blotched, confused. Our sensations share the same fate. Who has not felt the jar of his own language when seeking to make known what is arising in his soul ? Is that the reason we have learnt to call silence eloquent ? As Mr. Gautier went on with his musings, the image of Stella at the garden gate, steeped in the parting sun's golden light, rose suddenly before him, and the impression made by the sight, unconscious as he was of it at the time, was reproduced.

He remembered that it had flashed on him, that Raphael's idea of an angel must have been taken from some young girl on the eve of womanhood, when the face and its expression, softer and finer than that of a youth, had as yet none of the mobility or consciousness of her sex.

That day Mr. Smythe dined at the cottage. On Stella's cheek, when she came to dinner, still glowed the flush of the afternoon, lighting up her eyes to a feverish brilliancy. During the evening, instead of shy silence and devoted listening to cousin Louis, Stella allowed Mr. Smythe to draw her into conversation, talking with a flutter in her manner, but still gaily. When Major Dashwood turned the conversation on the news from the West Indies, it was from Mr. Smythe Stella asked an explanation of what her uncle was saying. Mr. Smythe represented the anti-slavery party, while Louis was more than usually harsh and stiff in defence of the measures taken by the Jamaica House of Assembly. He declared that the three clauses in the Disallowed Slave Act, which Mr. Huskisson gave as the grounds for its rejection, proved ignorance and malice on the part of the home Government; that he further believed, that the forcing the island back to the old laws of 1816, after the negroes had just had sufficient time to understand and appreciate the laws of 1826, was an artifice of the emancipation party to reach their ends through the insurrection of the slave population. "The end, with them, justifies the means," wound up Louis. Louis, though possessed of a thorough knowledge of his subject, spoke confusedly. At all times he had to contend against an almost invincible reserve, an instinct of his nature fostered by his habits of life, which made it painful for him to enter into discussions with strangers; but this evening he laboured, besides, under the influence of a strong involuntary antipathy strengthened by a new vexation. Mr. Smythe's answer was calm, unprejudiced, lucid, as suited one sensible he had the best cause by the hand, and the approbation of the young lady by his side. His eloquence never halted; he trusted to his memory, and he knew he might safely do so; for his aptitude at reproducing as his own the arguments he had heard brought forward by others was marvellous, as was his power of combining the most heterogeneous information into reasonings, quotations, and authorities for his arguments. He never made a slip. Celia, who averred she always trembled when men spoke loudly and with angry eyes, stopped the conversa-

tion by calling on Mr. Smythe to join her at the piano. Stella went and stood by her aunt, petitioning for duet after duet, even asking Mr. Smythe for his Romaic song, and going so far as to be persuaded to try it over with him. The sound of her voice assuredly did not reach Mr. Gautier's ears, it was so low a murmur; but the fact of her joining her voice with Stapylton Smythe was made patent to every one in the room, by the instructions Stapylton Smythe continually stopped his own singing to give her. In spite of Stella's gaiety, the evening seemed very long to her; her eye constantly turned to the clock on the mantel-piece, the quarter chimes lingered so unusually. At last she is in her own room, and her bright cheeks have grown pale, her bright eyes are dull. She undoes her long thick hair, letting it hang over her shoulders, fancying that her head aches less now the plaits are undone. Stella is dissatisfied; more than that, she is positively unhappy—a nameless dissatisfaction and unhappiness. The thought of cousin Louis is always uppermost. She recalls every word against him that she had heard from either Mrs. Joddrell or aunt Celia. “One-sided and fierce,” said the latter. “Selfish and ungrateful,” accused the former. They might have been the pleasantest of recollections, for the way in which the poor little girl cherished them—the way in which she annotates on his letter-writing and letter-receiving—is very like hatred, and yet she longed with all her heart to say, “Cousin Louis, forgive me, and I'll try to like your friend. I will call her Aunt Olympia.” She would have liked to go and knock at his door at that very instant in her dressing-gown and her long streaming hair, and beg him to be friends again; to own that she did not agree with what Mr. Smythe said, and did not like his Romaic song. But she knew she was past sixteen, and too tall to do such things; how she wished she were little once again, and might ask anybody and everybody at any hour of day and night to forgive her. Such a stupid world! She went to sleep at last, closed her eyes to all conventionalities, and ranged at will in the happier sphere of dreams. But when, on the following day, and the one that followed, Stella might have asked forgiveness, she did not; the moment she came into cousin Louis's presence, she felt there was a barrier between her and him, one not the less impassable because invisible. All the day she acted as if obstinately impenitent, never even looking towards cousin Louis, and always so kind and polite to Mr. Smythe. Every

night out of remorse, crying herself to sleep. "Cousin Louis was quite right, cousin Louis was most excellent. One ought to love and defend one's friends."

Stella probably had never heard of Seneca ; but those fine words, "I desire a friend so that I may have some one to die for," might have been written for her. Her whole heart superabounded with such a feeling, and acknowledged it in another. Mr. Gautier never sought her—never appeared to notice her ; but, nevertheless, the manner she had adopted towards Mr. Smythe had not escaped his attention, and that he considered the case serious was proved by his taking a step very much at variance with his character, that is, to interfere, unasked, in another person's concerns. He spoke earnestly to Major and Mrs. Dashwood on the subject of Mr. Smythe's attentions to Stella. "She is far too young for anything of the kind," said Louis, "and I do not like the man ; his manner is not that of a loyal lover." The major was sure it would come all right ; did not think Stella cared more for Mr. Smythe than she did for himself ; but if she did, why, Smythe was quite the gentleman. It was a good thing to get girls married—it was not right to doubt a man without some proof. For the major's part, he would be willing to go bail that Smythe was all right. Mr. Gautier listened patiently to this and to a great deal more of a piecemeal, groundless harangue. Then he turned to Celia : "What had she heard from Mrs. Hood of Mr. Smythe and his family—of his calling—of his antecedents ?"

"Louis," replied Celia, "you have found a mare's nest. Cannot you trust my woman's instinct. Stella does not care a jot for her handsome middle-aged admirer, he is old in her eyes ; I dare say she thinks him as old as Methuselah. I am sure I can't tell why the little monkey has suddenly changed her manner to him, unless it's out of coquetry to make you jealous, Louis." The major, the apologizer-general for every one but his wife, with an exclamation of, "Abominable nonsense !—stuff !" vanished.

"That is carrying the war into your neighbour's country," said Louis, calmly. "You are shifting the question. I am asking you about Mr. Smythe, and not about Stella."

"But if the tiresome child does not care for him, what does it matter to us who or what Mr. Smythe is ?"

"As there is an *if* in the case, it does matter to us—to you especially, who have the charge of your niece."

"I am sure I should be thankful if you would take the charge off my hands, Louis, you have such a paternal air, you can't think."

Louis looked displeased, and Celia, as timid as she was thoughtless, at once lowered her flag of defiance. "I wish that dear Mrs. Hubbard would come and claim Stella. Indeed, Louis, I am quite sensible that I am not the right person to have the care of a growing up girl. I feel as if I needed some one to guide me, rather than to have to guide another. I really do care very much for Stella, so don't think me hard-hearted; but I am convinced it would be better for her to be under some other management than mine. I am half afraid of her; and then, you see, it is a great tie upon me. I could not always be thinking and calculating whether every agreeable male creature from sixteen to sixty who comes to the house was a fit *parti* for my brother's daughter." Celia spoke this very fast.

"I understand that you would be glad to get rid of Stella."

"What a horrid way you have of putting things!" interrupted Celia.

"Pardon my masculine coarseness," went on Louis, "and pardon me also, my dear Mrs. Dashwood, for observing to you that good never comes of shirking one's responsibilities."

Something in the unusually formal appellation, something piquant in the tone of voice in which Mr. Gautier spoke—something, in short, that must have touched some old, long-unused spring, set the lady's temper in a blaze. "I don't admit the responsibility," she said. "Sisters are not born merely to look after their brother's children." And the beauty shook all her long, bright curls, with the angry toss she gave her little head. An instant to collect her energies—then: "I quite agree with you, however, about no good coming of shirking one's responsibilities, when responsibilities exist. I think now, a wife has a responsibility, and when she shirks it, she should give the world good proof she is in the right to do so. We admire Miss O'Neill in Mrs. Haller; we don't want Mrs. Hallers in our own families."

Mr. Gautier gave Celia a bitter, scornful look in return for this evident attack on Madame Olympia. Celia was in a sort of angry delight; the drop of gall at the bottom of her heart had been stirred up, and for a minute she was bomb-proof. "Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones, my wise cousin Louis."

Mr. Gautier rose, bowed as if in a silent acquiescence, and walked towards the door. Celia ran forward, standing between him and the door, saying, "You are as one-sided and furious as you were ten years ago; do not go away in a passion. Come, forgive me, Louis, forgive your cousin Celia, who never was wise nor good, nor ever will be. I believe I am bitter because I am not happy; it is not worth while to be angry with me, when we shall soon be separated for life." The violet eyes having recovered their sweetness, Louis could not, and did not resist the hand of amity offered to him, though he still wore a sullen look. "I do so hate changes and separations," continued Celia; "but I think, to avoid worries and always being put in the wrong by everybody, do what I will to please them, it would be best for Stella to go to Mrs. Hubbard. I wish, Louis, you would manage it for me, without it seeming unkind to the poor girl. She is a good girl, indeed, Louis, and if you were to advise her to go, she would be quite satisfied, and not think me hard-hearted. *Do* speak to her, will you?"

The pleader got a rash promise from Louis. "Well, I will see what can be done; but I don't approve of this manœuvring, this mining to cover your approach. I cannot see why you should not tell Stella what you have just said to me."

"Please, Louis;" and of course Louis, stern as he could be, was pleased to do what those sweet eyes pleaded for. He remembered how once upon a time he had doated on their colour and form.



CHAP. XVI.—"SPEAK OF THE WOLF, AND YOU SEE HIS TAIL."

"*PARLEZ du loup, et l'on en voit la queue,*" is not a polite way of ushering in Major-General Wolfe Hubbard, but it is convenient and explicit. While Mr. Gautier still held Mrs. Dashwood's hand, and remembered how, long ago now, he had doated on the colour of her eyes, a lumbering coach, called in 1828 a glass coach, drawn by two heavy horses, stopped before the gate of Waterloo Cottage. The tidy, low brougham of to-day, with its showy, worn-out horse, used by carriageless ladies for their monthly shopping and visiting, would have been pooh-poohed by Major-General Hubbard

and his lady, as beneath their social position. Louis and Celia, from the dining-room windows, watched the advent of the papa and mamma and two daughters, Louis explaining who they were. The visitors were shown into the drawing-room, where Stella was practising. She stood up as they came in; Pompey, not seeing his mistress, thought it unnecessary to give any name. The old general, as upright as if he had swallowed a ramrod, marched straight to the piano, took up his double eye-glass, suspended by a narrow blue ribbon round his neck, and peered at the music Stella had been playing. It was "*Dormez, dormez, mes chers amours*," arranged by H. Herz. "Trash—trash!" he muttered; "bad school—fond of music, my dear!" turning to Stella, who had remained standing by the music-stool.

"Yes, sir; but I play very little."

"We shall soon mend that," he answered, turning his eye-glass now on the young lady. "Get to Beethoven and Mozart: glorious school that, my dear Miss Joddrell, for of course you are Miss Joddrell?" The speaker smiled triumphantly at her. He was an under-sized, straight-backed, sloping-shouldered, big-nosed man of sixty-five. He wore his white hair, long, and flying to all the points of the compass, about his head. His forehead was high and retiring, the skin remarkably transparent, his eyes were of a bright light blue, half-concealed by shaggy gray eyebrows; he had a large mouth, large teeth, a large voice, and peculiarly large distorted feet. He was as upright in character as in figure, a brave officer, and a selfish man. The companion of his life, his larger, taller half, on entering the room, without paying any attention to Stella, had walked to the fire. She wore a wide-brimmed black velvet hat, the crown of which was shaped like a lancer's cap. A bunch of very shiny close-curling ringlets was on either side of her face, free from the silver lines variegating the rest of her visible hair; and across the top of her forehead, to mark its limits or be useful in some other way, ran a narrow black velvet. In an evening Mrs. Hubbard fastened a brooch in the centre of the black velvet, never absent, let her head-dress be what it might. Her face had a false air of youth and bloom about it that was indescribably perplexing to her contemporaries. Mrs. Hubbard had been once the reigning beauty of a garrison town, and at night her well-preserved figure, how well preserved her evening dresses allowed the public to judge, she was still a handsome woman; but she

had withal that peculiar air which clings to women who have roughed it, at some time or other, in barracks.

While the general was criticising Stella's music, the general's lady remained before the fire, presenting first one foot and then the other to the genial glow, and in what was meant for an aside, imparting her observations of Stella and the furniture to the Miss Hubbards. "She is darker than I expected,"—Jane and Emily Hubbard were blondes. "Everything very handsome, I am glad to see," sweeping the room with her experienced eyes. "Solid, not sham," gently raising, as she spoke, the velvet cover on the table nearest to her. The youngest daughter of the Hubbards was a perfect ball, so round, and so soft, with a pretty, good-natured face. Miss Hubbard was very like other people: you could find nothing salient about her,—not plain, rather pale, with a patient expression in her intelligent eyes. Until Celia entered the room, the major-general cross-questioned Stella, first, as to her age: "Ha! nearly sixteen and a half? Hand will not be too stiff yet," taking her unresisting fingers, and stretching them as wide asunder as could be done with safety.

"Had she a music-master? No!"—the shaggy eyebrows went up:—"not since she was nine years old! God bless me!"

At this exclamation Stella was so ashamed of herself that she burst out, "My aunt sings beautifully." "Charming, charming!" cried the general. "Maria!"—to his wife, "what an acquisition!" Mrs. Dashwood here appeared to answer for herself. Stella's pretty auntie, with her ærial, graceful walk, seemed more graceful, more lovely than ever. She and the visitors could not surely be of the same race. It was quite droll to see the impression Celia produced. The general brought his feet together in the first position, straightened his back,—no! that was impossible: he only tried to do so—held up his head, and did look so like a cock going to crow, that even Stella, without much sense of the ridiculous, very nearly laughed out. Mrs. Hubbard, on her side, looked as if somehow Mrs. Dashwood's personal appearance was a premeditated offence; but her daughters, the sensible one as well as the pretty one, smiled with pleasure. Without flattering Celia, it must be allowed that the sensation she generally produced was agreeable, and she was aware of it. There were hosts of handsomer women; Stella, for instance, was critically better-looking than her aunt, but Celia bore about her something like a ray of sunshine: her air was

sunny, her eyes, her complexion full of sparkle, her teeth glanced like light. Society had always petted her, so she had acquired a childlike, coaxing, cordial manner, that seldom failed of fascinating both men and women: indeed, her own sex were great patronizers of Celia. She was not, with all her charms, a woman who excited jealousies. She was a flower to be admired and valued, the length of a flower's bloom: not a gem to be hoarded for a lifetime. But Mrs. Hubbard did not patronise other people's flowers; from the time she had had the happiness of becoming a mother, she had commenced a struggle for the pre-eminence of her own children. She had depreciated and despised all little girls and boys, when her own were little boys and girls, growing more savagely and exclusively in jealous admiration of her own brood as they advanced to maturity. The major-general thought his own family so superior, that he might afford to be generous to those not so fortunate as to be Hubbards born, but the feminine shrewdness of the lady would not allow her such repose. Mrs. Hubbard permitted her hand to be shaken, but it hung very limp in Celia's grasp. “Apologies are tiresome, Mrs. Dashwood,” said Mrs. Hubbard; “If I were to give you an account of my occupations since my arrival in England, you would be able to frame an excuse yourself for my not having sooner called on you.”

“I should think,” said the little general, standing before Mrs. Dashwood, “that Mrs. Dashwood was one like Hotspur, to pluck a rose from a nettle.”

Celia was full of courtesy and sweet welcomes. “Had they had a good passage from Jamaica?”

“Very; the sea, in compliment to me,” affirmed Mrs. Hubbard, “was as smooth as glass.”

“In this young lady, Mrs. Dashwood,” interrupted the general, bringing forward Miss Emily, “you have a fac-simile of your new sister.”

“You give Stella and me a very pleasant idea of our new connection,” replied Celia, intending to give a hint to the Hubbards, that Mr. Joddrell's daughter was present, and ought not to be so overlooked.

“Mrs. Joddrell is taller and slighter than Emily,” said Mrs. Hubbard, impervious to all that did not regard her own family. Miss Hubbard, who was sitting near Stella, was the only one who took Celia's hint. “Do you remember your father, Miss Joddrell?” she asked.

"No."

"You will like my sister Georgy, I am sure," continued Miss Hubbard, kindly.

"Ah! Mrs. Dashwood!" exclaimed Mrs. Hubbard, with her powerful organ, "it is a sad thing for a mother to have one of her fair flock torn from her side."

"Hush! hush! my dear," interposed the general; "*torn* is a strong word—too strong; I am sure we are all very much satisfied, very much so indeed, with Mr. Joddrell; and my daughter, I know her, she is thoroughly right-minded, a young woman to know her duties, and to perform them: brought up in a soldier's family, excellent school for wives, ma'am: only three things necessary, I say, discipline, discipline, discipline!"

Major Dashwood, in a great state of fuss, here entered. The major's bow was very low, and his manner excruciatingly civil to the major-general and the major-general's family. The ladies were delighted with him directly, as he hoped this, and trusted the other, and assured them he should never have suspected they had ever been in the West Indies, they looked so fair and fresh. Occasionally Major Dashwood had a boyish simplicity of manner, which passed current for simplicity of character: then the way he said "Sir" to the little general, in such a respectful official tone! General Wolfe Hubbard immediately drew over himself all the mantle of dignity the other so eagerly doffed. The general mounted his highest horse, and the major sprang aside from its various vicious propensities, with a pleasurable alacrity that was wonderful. The major's chuckle of delight made Celia wince so, that she bade Stella call her cousin; Louis would soon take the man on the high horse off it, and replace the man tumbling head-over-heels on his feet again. Stella left the room with an expression on her face which made Mrs. Hubbard, who had no want of shrewdness, say: "Miss Joddrell is a fine girl: her eyes are good, but is she good-tempered?"

"The best little thing in the world," replied Celia, eagerly. Looking very unlike this description, Stella presented herself to Mr. Gautier, who had remained in meditation ever since the arrival of the Hubbards. "Auntie has sent for you," was all that the girl, pale with repressed emotion, said. Louis wanted to comfort her, for he guessed some of the feelings she was struggling with. He half put out his hand, but Stella either did not or would not see the movement. At that instant she was full of scorns for the whole of mankind; she

was wondering why there was a world at all, when it was for creatures such as she saw. Her young fiery heart was boiling over with rebellion. A Miss Hubbard chosen to fill her mother's place, to be her father's wife! Like many wiser and older people, Stella did not take the same view of those closely connected with her, as she did of those entirely unconnected with her. Louis paid his compliments to the Hubbard family, and as Celia had instinctively foreseen, as soon as Mr. Gautier appeared, father, mother, and daughters had neither tongues, nor eyes, nor ears for any one else. They had none of them ever succeeded in establishing an intimacy with him, even during the tedium of a long sea voyage, but he had undeniable advantages, one, the being a single man, the other, of being difficult of approach. Every one understands the attraction of an obstacle. Well, the Hubbards are gone, they have shaken hands affectionately all round. Emily kissed Stella: it was by surprise though. They are gone, but they are to come again that day week to dinner. For seven days Major Dashwood worried his wife about this dinner. "What were they going to have?" Celia of course neither knew nor cared; the major dared not ask his aunt, and Celia would not. "It will be all quite right," she said; "you make me hate the sight of people, there's always such a fuss about them."

The major was not to be repulsed. "Who were they to have?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Hood, and Mr. Smythe of course, four Hubbards, ourselves, and Louis."

"Hang it? let's have some one else, said the major, half-plaintively, "not always the same over and over again."

"Who can you get on such short notice?" asked Celia. "But I am sure I don't care; ask twenty strangers, if you like; settle it with your aunt: don't plague me."

The major spoke confidentially to Louis about the keeping up the honour of the family, of the necessity of showing General Hubbard that they had a social position. It didn't do to let oneself down; one should always be trying to hold one's place; if you relaxed the least, you would go to the bottom at once and be trampled in the mud. Louis was of opinion that the Hubbards would be only too glad to know Mrs. Hood; for to Louis a lady with so fine a house, carriage, and clothes, was a personage. Ten years in the mountains of Jamaica, surrounded by overseers and book-keepers, were

great excuses for Louis, and Major Dashwood made allowances for him. "It was the fault of his situation, poor fellow! but certainly no one was ever more ignorant of what was due to his social position." Unsympathized with, as he found himself, there was some glory in the major's single-handed efforts, and he deserved his success. He caught a G. C. B., with a real, born Lady Almeria for his wife, and the G. C. B.'s nephew, a young saucy lieutenant-colonel of dragoons. "God bless me!" exclaimed the poor major in his hour of triumph; "that makes us just thirteen."

Celia burst into a merry laugh. "Tu l'as voulu, Georges Dandin! But how do you make out only thirteen?" and Celia counted up the dinner party on her fingers, ending with Mr. Smythe. "I make fourteen," says she.

"No, no—nonsense!" cried the major, in a hot, overbearing tone. "I won't have a man we know nothing about, without a penny to bless himself with, to meet men of rank—two generals and a colonel!" Stella, who was sitting by, opened her eyes very wide when she heard her goodnatured uncle speak in these terms of their most intimate acquaintance and daily visitor.

"Well, *I* don't know who you can ask," said Celia.

"No: I dare say not; it's just your way—you neglect all my friends for the sake of some singing fellow, pottering in, morning, noon, and night."

It was Major Dashwood's way to put up with everything, to be friendly and intimate with any and every one who came to the house; but one day or other, when matters went contrary to his wishes, the small bitterness garnered in his heart came dropping out. "How dare you say such things to me?" flashed out Celia. "No man ever potted about the house, as you elegantly express it, until Stella came here. If you don't like it, why don't you tell the singing man so, instead of hitting at a poor woman who can't help herself?" Major Dashwood cleared his throat noisily, and then—walked away.

"I cannot help speaking that way, Stella," said Celia; "if I don't put my foot on your uncle's neck, he would ill-treat me. People talk of happiness: I wish they would tell me where it is to be found. I never saw it anywhere but in a novel; in real life things never go as one wants them, or expects them! The warmest heart woman can have is very soon frozen. Instead of being cared for, she must make

herself a slave to every whim her husband chooses to have : she dare not have an opinion of her own, nothing but contradiction, till in self-defence she is forced to act the virago—heigh-ho !” And Celia sauntered away in her turn, leaving Stella to reflect, not on the perplexities of married life (girls, whatever they hear or see, always imagine there is a paradise on earth in reserve for them), but to reflect that Mr. Smythe came to Waterloo Cottage for her, Miss Stella Joddrell. The first time her power to attract is made plain to a young woman, it marks an epoch in her life.

CHAP. XVII.—A DOOR MUST BE OPEN OR SHUT.

Who that saw Celia looking like a white rose, receiving her dinner guests, would have had the temerity to suppose that she and that handsome, urbane major, ever did all but fight ? Mrs. Hood was as faultlessly appointed as usual, quite mischievously handsome. How did she manage it ? Mr. Hood, tall, slim, silently benevolent. Mrs. Hubbard’s turban had a bird of paradise on the right side ; Aunt Philly wore one equally handsome on the left. But every one, somehow, felt themselves reduced in size when the G. C. B. came in, with Lady Almeria on his arm. My lady was forty at least, but alas ! neither fat, nor fair—just the contrary. The only thing really worth remarking about her was a goodnatured smile, and some magnificent pearls gained in India : and yet even Mrs. Hood felt cowed. Oh ! subtle influence of those four letters **L A D Y** preceding her name ! Mrs. Hubbard was accustomed to courting commanding officers’ wives, and she courtesied and smiled, and moved from the warmest corner of the sofa to the coldest. But in her heart of hearts she felt ill-used by being made second in a party she had supposed given in her honour. There was consolation, however, in the sight of that saucy young colonel, though Miss Emily rather shrunk from his bold dragoon eyes. The dinner was like all other London dinners, and does not need describing. So we will suppose it well over, and pass to the drawing-room. When the ladies adjourned thither, they found Stella waiting for them. She was not yet come out, so did not dine with the company. Celia had been very strong

on that point. "Who is that pretty girl?" asked my lady of Mrs. Dashwood.

"My brother's daughter:" and Mrs. Dashwood called Stella to her.

Now my lady had a horror of increasing her visiting list; so to avoid Mrs. General Hubbard's civilities, she took to patronizing Stella. "You look like a rosebud, my dear," began my lady, glancing at her own gorgeous attire, and the shine of bare arms and necks in the room. "How I do like these high white muslin dresses, Mrs. Dashwood; they give such a distinguished look. What a pity they are not more the fashion!" and Lady Almeria seeing Stella admiring her bouquet, took out of it some sprigs of *ginesta* (Spanish broom), and said, "Sit down on that footstool, and let me put these into your dark hair; you remind me quite of Eastern girls." The G. C. B.'s wife had been greatly accustomed to her own way in the colonies over which she had reigned with her husband; and she sat in Mrs. Dashwood's drawing-room amusing herself with decorating Stella's hair, and talking to Stella as coolly as though no one else had been in the room. My lady was fond, as most people are, of talking of themselves and their adventures; fondest of all of relating her terrors over her gallant husband's perils in battle. The nature of my lady was good; if she had grown trivial, and artificial, and arrogant, it was the fault of society. There was still some heart left in her. She adored her husband: he was her hero, because he was the hero of a hundred battle-fields. She did not see the least bit in the world that he was coarse, illiterate, or egotistical. Tears—real, honest tears—were in her eyes, as she described to Stella her sufferings during the battle that had made him a G. C. B. "I locked myself up, my dear. I was not going to hear any of their reports or rumours. I should have died if I had. I got hold of my prayer-book, and I read over and over again the 130th Psalm. I shall never forget it—never! I put cotton in my ears, but I heard Jack's voice a long way off, and then——. Never marry a soldier, child; one grows old too soon."

There was quite a hush through the room, so that all the ladies had the benefit of Lady Almeria's reminiscences. Mrs. Hood sat with her eyes shut; Emily Hubbard simpered, as if she were listening to some laughable tale; Mrs. Hubbard, looking extremely offended, kept as far as she could

from my lady's sofa, to show that she did not wish to hear what was being said, but still would not converse herself, in spite of Celia's conciliatory efforts. There was a spell on every one—they were over-crowded—except Aunt Philly, whom the monotony of Lady Almeria's voice soothed into her usual after-dinner nap. My lady's amusement lasted till the gentlemen came dropping in. "Look here, Jack," cried she, to her big husband, more like an alderman, truth to say, than a soldier. "Isn't she a pretty girl? Dear child! I have made her quite pale, telling her of our last battle." The G. C. B., the major-general, the saucy colonel, nay, all the gentlemen, save Mr. Smythe, clustered about my lady and Stella. Beauty at any age is attractive, but great youthfulness has a still more inviting power to elderly, or old persons. The two old officers poured out the most gallant speeches to Miss Joddrell, making her fully conscious of her own loveliness. Stella knew Louis heard every word, for she recognized his feet among all the varnished leather about her: she lacked the courage to look up at his face, but she was very glad he was there. Mrs. Dashwood, usually as calm as moonlight with regard to the beauty of other women, this evening felt aggrieved by the notice bestowed on Stella. Celia felt like the spoiled child of a family, overlooked in her own domain. Even Louis—ah! there was the sting—even Louis was following the crowd. "Stella seemed to be giving herself," so thought Celia, "strange airs," and somehow pretty Auntie was surprised into being angry with the young creature smiling and blushing under the first impression of her own attractions. Stella's attention was here drawn from trying to hear what cousin Louis was saying to General Hubbard about the failure of his mission, by Lady Almeria's question of "What is that gentleman's name, my dear?" pointing out Mr. Smythe, who had not formed one of the little court round her ladyship and Stella. Mr. Smythe seemed to have returned to his allegiance to Mrs. Hood, so sedulously was he devoting himself to that lady, seated half-hidden behind her chair. As soon as Lady Almeria heard the name, she pushed her way to Mr. Smythe, and tapping him on the shoulder with her fan, exclaimed, "I did not think I was so changed that old friends could not recognize me." Mr. Smythe's delicate pallor turned to crimson as he rose, stammering in a way most unusual for him—stammering as folks do who meet some one they had rather not—

something about "being honoured by her ladyship's recollection and unwillingness to intrude."

"Nonsense!" said my lady, with soldier-like frankness, to him: "I am always glad to see old friends, particularly those I knew in our campaigning days—how many years, eh? since we last met? thirteen at least; it was at Toulouse, was it not? Ah! I recollect all about it now, as if it were yesterday—and how curious! Seeing you, reminds me who it is that pretty girl is like. I have been trying all the evening after it. It's that Spanish dancer who turned all our heads—what days those were! You recollect as well as I do, I know," and my lady laughed.

"You were in the same boat with all our young men." Stella grew white and red, looked furtively at Louis; she was afraid he might hear what Lady Almeria was saying about *a dancer*. Stella was as sensitive for him as he could be for himself—no one must give him pain. She might hate a dancer or dancers in the lump: that was another affair; but she would rather fall down and worship them all than ever see his feelings hurt again. But Louis, though his eye caught Stella's, did not hear what my lady was saying; and my lady, who noticed Stella's changing face and Mr. Smythe's confusion, said to him: "I am not going to tell tales out of school. Come and speak to Sir John; he will be very glad to see you again." The G. C. B. made his commander-in-chief's bow, and said "Very happy," without any very clear understanding of what he was called on to remember. The G. C. B., as a rule, never recollected civilians. Lady Almeria cross-questioned Mr. Smythe first about himself—what had he been about all these years? and then about Stella; every now and then observing, "What a likeness to La Nena! You are faithful to old partialities, for I see you are in love again." Mrs. Hood had heard all that was said about the dancer, and she heard the present accusation. Mrs. Hood was one of those women who cannot be mortified with impunity. She was a woman who must pay back a secret humiliation by some public one. Ah! Mr. Smythe had paid her attention to keep out of Lady Almeria's way, so that Stella might not hear of any of his follies. Ah! he was trying to make a screen of her, Mrs. Hood. But for a while, all conversation and hostilities were put out of the question by Celia being led to the piano by the little Major-General, who had been perfectly wretched at the time slipping away so wasted.

In Celia's singing, art veiled itself. Every one, except the very initiated, talked of how sweetly and naturally Mrs. Dashwood sung—so simply! Her style had, indeed, none of the impressiveness of that of the Miss Hubbards. Theirs was of the kind that seems to bring plaudits as a natural result. Celia's, on the contrary, often threw you into a reverie, that made you forget the singer and compliments. While Miss Emily sang, the Major-General stood as nearly as possible in the centre of the room, his quick eyes roaming round in quest of a stray whisper. Mrs. Hood, who enjoyed no music but that of a military band, exerted herself to praise Miss Emily's performance, and when the general, who made the tour of the company, collecting praises as a blind man's dog does pence, stood before her, she emphatically declared that Miss Emily Hubbard's singing went far beyond the limits of the young-lady school of music. Down into a chair by the cunning woman's side dropped the gratified general. "Ah! I am afraid you are flattering a silly old father; but I may say to you, who understand and appreciate good music, that I have been told (sinking his voice, and with his hand screening his mouth) that she might shine professionally: of course, I consider that going rather too far, but the voice, the voice itself, that is the gift of Providence, and there would be something worse than ingratitude in denying that it *is* good."

The Major-General put on a very seriously believing face as he said these last words. There was no wrong done, but it was very droll to Mrs. Hood, who cunningly took up the cue. "What an advantage it will be for that poor uneducated Stella Joddrell, to be with your daughters, general; I cannot tell you how I rejoice to think of it. One must be a mother to know how to manage children, and Mrs. Dashwood, poor thing, has neither the experience nor the necessary strength of character to educate that girl. I assure you I have often had sad thoughts about her."

Mrs. Hubbard, who was within hearing, remarked that she suspected the management of the young lady would be no sinecure. Sagacious Mrs. Hood turned to the Roman-looking matron and replied, "She is fond of reading and tractable, and I dare say, with proper regular instruction, and with such examples as the Miss Hubbards, she would improve immensely."

Here Celia came to say civil things about Miss Emily's singing. "We were just saying, dear, what an advantage it

will be for Stella to have a companion of her own age and so gifted as Miss Emily Hubbard." Stella was certainly more than ten years Emily's junior.

"I am sure of that," stammered Celia. "She knew very well what Mrs. Hood was about; if my lady had left Stella's hair alone, and Louis sat in a corner as usual, probably Celia might not have felt so sure of that."

"Has Miss Joddrell any voice?" asked the general.

"A little, a very small compass," answered Celia.

"My dear madam, no one can decide on the little or the much, until the organ has been subjected to tuition; my eldest daughter was said to have scarcely any voice, and see what we have drawn it out to." What could Celia do, but smile and look convinced?

The G. C. B. and his lady went away first; then the colonel of dragoons, with a blossom of *genista* fallen from Stella's hair in his hand; presently the Hoods, Mrs. Hood telling Stella to remember my lady's lesson in hair-dressing—the result was charming—adding distinctly, "I shall not say good-bye now, I shall see you again before you go." Mrs. Hood's voice ceased, and Stella could hear Mrs. Hubbard saying to her aunt, "I am busy reading with my boy to prepare him for a military tutor; he is much about Miss Stella's age, they can take their lessons together. My Tom has a taste for figures, and gets on well with algebra, but slowly with languages; the one will be an assistance to the other, on the system of mutual instruction. We begin our daily studies, Miss Joddrell," facing round on the surprised girl, "with a page or two of Locke or Dugald Stewart; and then after serious lessons are over, we have Sir Walter, or Campbell, as a reward; music I leave to the general."

"Capital, indeed," resounded from Major Dashwood, not understanding the motive of the lady's harangue, and speaking merely from horror of the silence with which it was received.

"Carriage is waiting, my dear," whispered the General. "We'll settle the preliminaries about our young friend on our next meeting; as a rule I never keep horses waiting—a merciful man is merciful to his beast, Mrs. Dashwood." That was the most comforting speech Stella had heard from any of the Hubbards. She said "Good night," and went hastily away—too sad to be rebellious. This, then, was to be the end of all the brightness she had anticipated from cousin

Louis's visit? When she had closed the door, Major Dashwood asked his wife, "What the deuce the general and Mrs. Hubbard were preaching about?" Aunt Philly remarked before she left the room to count over the plate, that "she could not understand people wanting to get rid of their own flesh and blood."

"What do you think I ought to do, Louis?" asked Celia, turning to him. "I am so badgered by one person and another, that I declare I can no longer distinguish between what's right and what's wrong." Louis looked up from a book of engravings he had been apparently studying. "My dear cousin," he said, "what has passed this evening between you and the Hubbards, appears to me to have ratified the arrangement your brother made with them according to your own wish."

"You are just as bad as the rest, Louis, making out that I am in fault. I could not help Harriette's speaking to Mrs. Hubbard on the subject."

"Do you wish to keep Stella with you?" inquired Louis.

"I should not like to be unkind to her," was the reply.

"There's an old French proverb, Celia, which says, 'A door must be either shut or open.' Shut your door and retain Stella, or open it and let her go. You must do one or the other; take counsel of your pillow."

"I would rather take counsel with you." He thought for an instant, hesitating between what he knew Stella would prefer, and that which he believed best for her, and said, "Open the door."



CHAP. XVIII.—THE DOOR IS OPENED.

STELLA, on going to her own room, did the most natural thing in the world for a girl—nay, even for a heroine to do. She looked at herself in the glass, my lady's flowers still in her hair, and she saw that she was lovely. Over her serious face slowly stole a smile, in the way smiles come to a child's face after the shock of a surprise. What is the first thought of a young girl when she becomes aware of her own gifts? Why did Stella smile at the sight of the celestial treasure of beauty she possessed, but that she had a treasure to give away. She took the flowers from her hair, one by one; there

were many both rich and rare. Stella knew the name and quality of none, except of the pale yellow blossoms. "*Genista* or Spanish broom," she would remember it by its prettiest name, and she wrote *genista* on the piece of paper in which she wrapped a sprig before consigning it to her desk. Stella, though unvarnished by education, perhaps because little educated, had a good share of poetry in her nature. Mr. Smythe had sentimentalised over this flower, telling her that it grew on rock and waste, bestowing on the one and the other its own sweetness, and asking nothing in return. That was exactly her child's ideal, of loving for love's sake. She dwelt on the description, till a network of thoughts enmeshed her brain and heart, and languid, softened, wearied, she lay down to sleep. When Stella had kept a furtive but steadfast look on Louis's boots, while Lady Almeria ornamented her hair, she had heard the tones of his voice, but not the words he was saying to General Hubbard. He had said decidedly, "I have nothing further to do here, I shall sail by next month's packet." Louis calculated, as soon as he was in the enjoyment of the quiet of his own room, that he would be gone in three weeks. How glad he should be to get back to his own home, to see none but familiar faces, hear none but familiar voices—not wasting life as these people did, blowing bubbles themselves, and full of insatiable desire for the bubbles of others; the party had left Louis's thoughts double-dyed with misanthropy. Society (so called) he considered to be full of traps for men like himself, scrupulous and serious where others would be careless. "Who can tell," quoth he to himself, "whether the meaning of that warning, 'Thou shalt give an account of every idle word,'—a warning apparently involving a punishment disproportioned to the offence, might not be an admonishment that as no action of our life can be without a result, it behoved us to be for ever on our guard." And yet he had almost in a joke decided Celia to send away her friendless niece. Louis was a self-tormentor, and spent a sleepless night; unlike the generality of mankind, his having injured any one was no foundation for his dislike. He took himself roundly to task, calling up for his own punishment a most forlorn picture of Stella. He wished—he could not distinctly state what he wished. "Does any one ever know in time?" What did the Hubbards talk of during their long drive home? "A pleasant party," remarked the general. "Good wine and pretty women."

"Hem!" responded Mrs. Hubbard.

"Oh! how sweetly pretty Mrs. Dashwood is," exclaimed Emily.

"Mrs. Hood is the finer woman of the two," was what Mrs. Hubbard said, but did not think.

"She asked where we lived, so I suppose she means to call; we are not compelled to visit every one who calls, we may pick and choose."

"I know that Mrs. Hood has a carriage of her own," said Emily.

"Stella is an interesting-looking girl, don't you think so, mamma?" asked Miss Hubbard.

"Interesting? no, she looks a sly minx. I have my doubts about her parentage. As soon as I get hold of her, I'll examine her finger-nails and the back of her neck, and if I find she has any black blood in her, I'll tell Mr. Joddrell pretty plainly that I won't have the care of any half-castes, were they twenty times his daughters."

"But, mamma," began Miss Hubbard.

"Hold your tongue, Jane; what do you know about such things I should like to know?"

"My dear," interposed the general, "I suppose you'll allow that I may know something of the subject, and I assure you there is no black blood in this case—more likely blue blood, for Miss Joddrell is the child of Joddrell's first wife, a Spanish lady. All correct, I assure you; he showed me the certificate of his first marriage and of the child's birth and baptism. She is his heiress, recollect, unless, indeed——"

"Black or blue, I don't see much difference," returned Mrs. Hubbard. "A foreigner is nearly as bad as a negro; I hate them, with all their nasty, vicious, attractive ways. As for this Miss, I can tell her I'll soon cure her of her vanity." Nobody answered Mrs. Hubbard, for all the party present knew her bark was worse than her bite; she was in the habit of intoxicating herself with her own words, but as to deeds, she was harmless. Ten days after the dinner party at Waterloo Cottage, Stella was domiciled with the Hubbards. The condemned criminal has all his wants and wishes carefully attended to during his last hours. His judges, who when he was free would have thought it beneath their dignity to remember or recognise his existence, are ready, so soon as he is condemned, to show him a certain attention and condescension. Much in the same way did Celia heap benefits

on Stella during these ten days; and very much like the condemned criminal probably Stella felt. The kindnesses perhaps scarcely perceived from the tension of the mind with another subject. The days seemed to Stella without time; it was breakfast, dinner, and night. Stella was not alone thinking of her own going away, she was also counting how many days—only days now—Louis would be in England. It would be very strange not to see him! Stella turned very cold when she thought of it, but the resigned feeling of one who can do nothing to avoid what is about to happen, made her appear calm. She attended to all Celia's demands on her attention, for Celia was soothing her conscience by uncommonly active care of Stella's wardrobe. "If you want anything, Stella," kissing her at the same time, "remember to write to auntie, but there won't be any need of letters, for I shall be constantly going to see you and having you here." Privately Celia wished that Harriette would advise her, that is, give her leave to keep Stella—but Harriette was inexorably blind—blind as destiny itself, to Celia's compunctions.

"I shall not be unhappy, auntie," replied Stella. Pretty auntie's eyes, with tears in them, always fortified Stella's powers of endurance. "I shall work hard with 'my son Tom,'" and Stella smiled. Celia did not bear the smile well, it smote her heart. From out of the bosom of the most commonly endowed families there sometimes issues forth a being so peculiarly gitted, that we raise our hands in wonder how so superior a being could spring from such a source. Whatever strength or virtue had belonged to her English or Spanish ancestors, was certainly summed up in Stella. She was brave of heart, generous, truthful, forbearing with the weak, intrepid with the strong. See how courageous a child she had been with her stern grandmother, how gentle to her aunt. For Celia's sake she tried to shed no tear, give no sign of distress, even when delivered over to Mrs. Hubbard. Cousin Louis was not well impressed by her fortitude. Despite his lively faith in his own penetration, Louis was very apt to see through the dark glass of a preconceived opinion: perhaps it is that men are more flattered by a display of weakness than gratified by that of strength in women. The trial was greater for Stella when Louis went to the general's house to bid her farewell. "What shall I say to your father for you, Stella?" She could not answer directly; she put her hands together, rubbed them with a quick nervous movement, almost wring-

ing them in the effort to say quietly, "Give him my kind love."

"And nothing else?"

"I don't think I have any more to say," the muscles round the mouth quivering, so that it was a pain in itself merely to look at her.

Louis took her hand, it was icy cold. "Then now I must say, Good-bye."

"Pray forgive me, cousin Louis, for what I said one day," was spoken in a breathless whisper.

"Forgive you? to be sure, we shall always be friends."

Stella thought she saw the glitter of joy in his eyes. "You are glad to go, cousin Louis?"

"I am returning home," he said. "And now may I go?" he half smiled; it was to hide an emotion that was gaining on him every moment. Stella loosened her grasp of his hand. Poor child! she was past feeling any shyness or embarrassment. "When we meet again, I shall expect great things from you. God bless you, my dear little cousin." He was gone! Stella rushed to the window, regardless of the presence of Mrs. and the Miss Hubbards, threw up the sash and leant far out. She watched Mr. Gautier's erect figure go slowly and firmly along the street; he did hesitate when he reached the corner, but he turned it, and then she felt as if it was too hard to bear, better to dash herself down on the pavement. Jane Hubbard (perhaps she had once known such a state of mind) came quickly to the girl's side, and threw her arm round Stella's waist. They remained at the window as if looking into the street, Stella seeing only a great darkness. She could not swallow, and her breath came in hoarse gasps. Jane was very patient and tender, but Mrs. Hubbard cried—"Shut that window, girls; the air cuts one in two." Mrs. Hubbard was quilting a grey silk cloak lined with pink, Louis having been admitted to the ladies' workroom. Stella could never afterwards see a grey silk cloak with a pink lining without a contraction of the heart.

Jane Hubbard took Stella away to her own room. There Stella's courage at last broke down, and with a sharp cry of "I can't help it, I can't help it; he is my own cousin!" she burst into bitter weeping. For days and days after, Stella used to look wildly into every hackney coach with luggage that passed her in her daily walks; for days and days she would start and redden at any glimpse she caught of some

tall, slender man, with an inflexibly upright carriage. Then she learned to expect no more, and to apply herself to the lessons she had in common with Mrs. Hubbard's son, Tom; but she did not forget that cousin Louis was in the world, and often found comfort in the saying, "Mountains alone do not meet."

PART II.

“Thys Day a Man, To-morrow Non.”

CHAP. XIX.—BOUND FOR FAIRY LAND.

ON the 15th of October, 1830, a large party was assembled in the front parlour of the Ship Hotel, at Gravesend. The reader knows, with one exception, every one of the persons seated at what has been an early dinner or luncheon. Mrs. Hubbard is at the head of the table, the little Major-General at the foot; Major and Mrs. Dashwood, the Miss Hubbards, young Tom, Mr. and Mrs. Hood, a Captain Hobson (the only stranger), and Stella, are present. None of those we have known intimately are missing save aunt Philly and Mr. Stapylton Smythe. Aunt Philly had protested “she hadn’t the heart of a tigress,” and stayed away. Mr. Smythe had been absent from England for more than six months on some mission from the chamber of commerce of a great manufacturing town. Mr. Stapylton Smythe had had a faded, dispirited look before he went. Mr. Hood probably enjoyed Mrs. Hood’s banterings more than the object of them. Celia had of course followed her friend’s lead, and slighted him. Altogether Mr. Smythe had done well to go; he was missed. This is a party in honour of some one, for as soon as the cloth is removed, and the waiter has left the room, the Major-General fills his own and the glasses of his neighbours on his right and left, and, pushing on the decanter, desires every one to have a bumper ready for his toast. The command is obeyed in silence: Celia’s cheek is white, her violet eyes reddened with tears. Major Dashwood clears his throat continually. Mrs. Hubbard wishes to represent a Spartan matron, and only contrives to look excessively cross. “Stella, my dear,”—the General gives the word sharply,—“here’s your good health, and God bless you.”

“God bless you, Stella! God bless you!” goes round and round the table, not always very clearly articulated.

Stella is sitting by Mrs. Hubbard, and leans towards that august lady, who suddenly kisses her, but shoves her away at the same time, and rises. The poor lady is dreadfully afraid of being considered weak. Every one follows Mrs. Hubbard's example ; they gradually move to the large bow-window, and stare at the masts of a ship which are to be seen above the roofs of the opposite houses. The masts are those of the *Marlborough Castle*, a fine A 1 vessel of 900 tons burden, belonging to the consignees of Mr. Joddrell's coffee. Stella is going to Jamaica under the special care of the old master, called by courtesy Captain Hobson, the same who had brought her when a little child to England. Stella was still the Stella we have known her, not changed, only developed into a charming creature. A year and then another year and a half had elapsed since Mr. Gautier's departure, and Stella will pass her nineteenth birthday on board a ship. Healthy-minded as before, as animated by a spirit striving after good, she has one of those natures which rise gradually by their native strength towards their heaven-born ideal ; one who, when the day of trial comes, incapable of self-degradation, will soar above the evil passions none can escape. She is more or less dear to all the present party. Major-General Wolfe Hubbard boasts of how he has drawn out her voice, and as to the opinion of her school-fellow, Tom, his feelings may be gathered from certain verses written in the album (then a fashionable article), the parting gift of his sisters to Stella. Mrs. Hubbard liked her far better than she approved of showing, and had come since the birth of a son and heir, nay, two heirs, to Mr. Joddrell's West India properties, to allow Stella to call her "Grand-mamma." Whenever Mrs. Hubbard spoke of her *bona fide* grandchildren, she always explained, as something meritorious, that there were only ten months between the infants. "Georgy takes after me," added Mrs. Hubbard, "within twenty months both my elder girls were born." Stella, in spite of her wishes, had grown taller ; her slight figure was firm rather than pliant, her step resolute, her face pure in outline, her brow most smooth, her eyes full of goodness. Really, there is something of supernatural power in their expression, as she says farewell to the group around her.

Captain Hobson proposes that some of the party, nay, all, if they like, should accompany Miss Joddrell on board and see the ship ; his barge will hold them all. The offer is accepted, and Mrs. Hubbard enjoys the respectful ceremony

of the oars tossed up by a clean set of blue jackets—a mark of respect reminding her of “the light of other days.” Some other lady passengers are already on board, and one, a very fat, rosy-cheeked, elderly woman, who calls Captain Hobson her polar star, promises the weeping Celia to take particular care of that sweet, pretty young lady. “Promise to come back, Stella, to come back to auntie,” cried Celia, in an agony. Positively Mr. Hood *has* something amiable in him after all! He is interfering to shorten this painful scene; he shakes Stella by the hand, and says, “Remember me as a friend,” and almost carries Celia away. Major Dashwood is unloading his pockets. Heaven knows, those innumerable little parcels of cakes and sweetmeats are not much after Stella’s heart, yet the sight of them is almost as bad as Celia’s entreaties. “Now, my dear Miss Joddrell,” says Captain Hobson, who has had his experience of such dreadful quarters of an hour, “go to your state-room and lie down. By-and-by I’ll send you a cup of strong tea.”

When the sun rose next morning, the *Marlborough Castle* was in the Downs. Stella was not ill, but she willingly remained in her little cabin. She had her album on the bed, and was looking through it rather sadly. As a frontispiece Jane Hubbard had painted a goodly ship labouring in mountain-high, ink-black waves; overhead, ink-black clouds; one bright star alone breaking the darkness. Round the sketch is a kind of frame—signs of safety, strong anchors of hope, and chains of faith. On the next page was gummed one of the sprigs of genista out of Lady Almeria’s bouquet, and underneath it this very free school-girl translation from the Italian of Leopardi :—

“THE FLOWER OF THE DESERT.

“Oh, pretty flower! that seems to compassionate woe,
Thy sweet perfume on its way to Heaven consoles the desert.”

Mrs. Hubbard had written out, in her manly characters, “The Devonshire Lane.”* treating of the subject nearest her maternal heart. Shall we skip it, or read it?

“In a Devonshire Lane as I trotted along
T’other day, much in want of a subject for song,
Thinks I to myself, I have hit on a strain,
Sure marriage is just like a Devonshire Lane.

* By the Rev. T. Marriott.

- "In the first place, 'tis long, and when you are in it,
It holds you as fast as a cage does a linnet,
For howe'er rough and dirty the way may be found,
Drive forward you must, since there's no turning round.
- "But, though 'tis so long, it is not very wide,
For two are the most that together can ride,
And even then 'tis a chance but they get in a pother,
And jostle, and cross, and run foul of each other.
- "Oft poverty greets them with mendicant looks,
And care pushes by them o'erladen with crooks,
And Strife's grating wheels try between them to pass,
And Stubbornness blocks up the way on her ass.
- "Then the banks are so high, both on left hand and right,
That they shut up the beauties around from the sight,
And hence you'll allow, 'tis an inference plain,
That marriage is just like a Devonshire Lane.
- "But thinks I, too, these banks within which we are pent,
With bud, bloom, and berry are richly besprent;
And the conjugal fence which forbids us to roam,
Looks lovely when decked with the comforts of home.
- "Tho' long be the journey, and narrow the way,
I'll rejoice that I've seldom a turnpike to pay,
And whate'er others think, be the last to complain,
Though marriage *is* just like a Devonshire Lane."

Then came honest young Tom's verses, headed—

"PARTING.

"ADDRESSED TO A YOUNG LADY.

- "How painful the hour that compels me to part
With the friend that I cherish as a gem of the heart;
But, ah! more severe when the parting is told
With a voice unimpassioned, an aspect that's cold;
When the sigh meets no sigh from an answering breast,
When the hand pressing warm vainly sues to be press'd,
For then 'tis not absence alone I deplore,
But friendship decayed and affection no more.
From the friend that I love, when I wander alone,
My thoughts unexpressed, and my feelings unknown,
Whilst hope strives in vain through futurity's gloom
To desery one bright moment in seasons to come.
Yet then if a sigh be but heard from the breast,
If the hand pressing warm in requital be press'd,
Some soft recollections will still be in store,
Though in parting I feel I may never meet more.

"T. H., Oct. 15, 1830."

Stella's sadness was not proof against Tom's effusions and the General's contribution, which being a sketch in water-colours of a sailor, very jolly indeed, cannot be given here.

The laugh, however, in the state of the young lady's spirits, naturally ended in a fit of crying. There is an element of the terrible in nights at sea. The dash of the waves against the planks to which your bed is fastened, the hurly-burly of the wind, the flapping of the sails, the rattling of the blocks, the straining, the creaking, the shoutings and bawlings, all seem to the landsman's ear to predict disaster and danger. The sense of helplessness—that no presence of mind can avail—adds to the disquiet. With unwillingness, yet with great perseverance, the passenger at sea goes on summing up all the mischances that *may* occur. Every story, every picture, that one has seen or heard of shipwreck is recollected. This second night of Stella's voyage there was a stiff breeze; there was a good deal of tacking and of mainsail hauling, of the working of yards, of belaying; and ding-dong in Stella's ear rung the lines—

“Cables entangling her,
Ship spars for mangling her,
Ropes sure of strangling her,
Blocks over-dangling her,
Boreas blustering,
Thunder clouds mustering,
Trunks tipsy-topsy,
The ship in a dropsy,
Waves oversurging her,
Syrens a-dirgeing her,
Seadogs and unicorns,
Mermen carnivorous,
Good Lord deliver us!”

Tom Hubbard in his fun had been repeating these rhymes to her for the last fortnight, and now she could not get rid of them; they fitted exactly to every noise, like a song to an accompaniment. She tried the old remedies for procuring sleep; she thought of a hundred sheep going over a stile, and she counted them—she turned on the right side, and put one arm over her head—she was as wide awake as ever. At last she thought of her Evian nightly hymn—would that charm away the “mermen and seadogs?”

“If in the night I sleepless lie,
My soul with heavenly thoughts supply;
Let no ill dreams disturb my rest,
No power of darkness me molest.
Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
Praise him all creatures here below,
Praise him——”

Stella was fast asleep.

"My dear," said Mrs. Popplewell, the rosy matron, and the occupant of the next berth to that of Stella, "would you just sing a little louder of a night? I don't know how, but the hymn, you know, and the innocence, and all that, make me feel safer like.—Oh! my dear miss, 'they that in ships with courage bold, on swelling waves their trade pursue, do amazing wonders view.'"

When the *Marlborough Castle* had pitched forwards, than backwards, rolled one way and then the other, as if she intended to try which side was the pleasantest, whirled round in a flurry, and finally taken to courtesying down into the very depths below the waves, the wretched passengers were told they were out of the Bay of Biscay, and would soon be in the Trades. The time also came when the ladies were assured that they had now "got their sea legs," and were encouraged to go on deck. A steady wind at last bellied the sails, and those of the crew who were awake lay along the fore-deck, lazily watching the way the good ship slipped along. All was so quiet, now, that there was scarcely a sound, but the one so like a whisper and a kiss given by the water, as the vessel opened through it a path for herself. Of an evening, Captain Hobson would call on some of his men for a song. One who prided himself on being a "kiddy man-of-war's man," was peculiarly great in the "Are-thu-u-u-sa." Stella delighted in sitting on deck. She was made fast in a chair lashed to the taffrail, a precaution against white squalls, and thus she would sit for hours. There is no tedium at sea for those who have eyes. Stella sat making out the cloud pictures in the heavens, or watching the manœuvres of the Portuguese men-of-war sailing round the *Marlborough Castle* for hours. Often she saw strange, unknown lights playing within the waves. At other times she would be so absorbed in her own thoughts that sea and cloud were unperceived; sailors, passengers, never heard, and any one speaking to her would make her start nervously and look confused. She preferred these reveries to every amusement offered by her fellow passengers. She was not talking now to air brothers and sisters. It was the turn of visions to address her; how divinely one of those phantoms spoke, a phantom with a kingly port, grand eyes, and proud mouth. Let us leave unexamined these youthful meditations. It could not but be always a shock to awake from such heavenly dreams to answer the short, ruddy, old seadog, Captain Hobson, with

his small, twinkling, blue eyes, and a voice as rough as his pea-coat, or to relinquish listening to angelic accents to attend to Mrs. Popplewell's very mundane hopes and fears about Mr. P—— and her *pen*.*

There were certain black faces, too, which Mrs. Popplewell evidently looked forward with pleasure to seeing again. Stella, encouraged by this, ventured one day to ask "if the negroes were not very unhappy?" "Lor! Miss Joddrell, that's only one of your English notions. You'll soon get rid of them. Blacks are not whites, nor never will be. You may hammer at their heads as long as you like, but neither you nor the cleverest wig in England will ever put a man or woman's sense into them. Suppose you make them free, and what'll come of them do you think? Why, they'll die like flies in winter, I can tell you. Where'll they get doctors or doctor's stuff? or, where'll they get clothes to cover their nakedness? Work, you say—they'll never work without the driver's whip."

Stella's face grew very red. "Don't meddle with them, Miss Joddrell," continued Mrs. Popplewell: "Custos Joddrell's daughter don't never need to do; just let 'em be as God made 'em, and you won't harden your heart. I am a Jamaica woman, born and bred, lived with blacks and browns all my life; we creoles ain't the ones that have the heaviest hand. The ladies who come from English boarding-schools and are full of texts and what not, see *them* four or five years after they come to the country; it's for everlasting flog, flog, stocks, stocks; they won't let 'em be blacks, want to make 'em into fellow-creatures, and end by hating 'em worse than pison."

"But it is so dreadful," said Stella, made timid by Mrs. Popplewell's eloquence, "that men and women can be sold like tables and chairs; that by law they are things, not persons."

"As for that, those days are past," cried another lady passenger, "and I have just this to remark, they will very soon be selling us. If I had a young daughter, it would not be now that I'd be having her out. The best days of poor Jamaica are set, and Lord knows what is in store for us."

"Oh! why," cried Stella, "cannot every one agree to give the slaves their freedom, and let them work like the poor people in England?"

* *Anglicè*, a villa in the lowlands of Jamaica; formerly exclusively used to denote a place for breeding or grazing cattle.

"Because, miss, as I told you before, blacks *can't* work like whites—blacks ain't no more capable of thinking for themselves than brute animals: scrupulosity about having slaves sits very well on a pretty, rich young lady, but it don't answer for poor folks like us to have our property swabbed away—whether or no, Tom Collins—as my Mr. P—— says. We'll rather give ourselves to the Americans."

"For my part," said the other lady, "I think it a downright piece of blind cruelty to be wanting to make the negroes free."

Stella was silenced, not convinced. One of aunt Philly's last gifts had been Wilberforce's pamphlet on slavery, and the texts on the title-page kept rising to Stella's lips. "Do justice and love mercy." "Woe to him who buildeth his house by unrighteousness and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work." A time, yea, many times, came, that were to recall these lines to Stella's memory, and to grave them on her brain in characters of living fire. The moral vulgarity of her present opponents was more than she had courage to encounter. Besides, she could not consider them as representing the opinions and feelings of the educated classes of Jamaica. She had heard cousin Louis speak on the subject of slavery. He was entirely against the institution; he did not wish nor ask for its permanence; he required, and Stella thought he had a right to require (when had Stella found a fault in cousin Louis?) that as one law had undertaken to make secure such property, another law, in doing it away, should provide remuneration for the losers. Then cousin Louis, and the advice he had given her—Devote thyself; sacrifice thyself; forget thyself—made her forget Mrs. Popplewell and Co. She would show him that she had grown wiser as well as older. What resolutions she made that her life should be one of duty! how glad it made her to be able so plainly to see what her duty was. Her father had recalled her to his home, he said, to lighten the burden of house and children to her step-mother; and that she was not to expect a life of continued gaiety; on the contrary, must rest satisfied with remaining nine months of the year in the retirement of a house on the mountains of Jamaica. Was this prospect unpleasant to Stella? Did she not spend hours and hours in plans which spread a glow of happiness over her whole being?

Week followed on week, and the ship was beginning to feel like a home, when she was told that they were now within a few days' sail of Jamaica, and presently men were sent aloft to look out for land; other men were in the chains throwing the deep sea line. "By the deep nine," they sing, in sonorous tones of a startling melancholy to landsmen. One morning early, Stella saw a huge object apparently close to the bull's-eye of her cabin; her heart leaped up with a strange joy and swelled with a strange anxiety. It was a positive relief to be told it was only St. Kitts. With as much surprise as curiosity she examined the trees, the cliffs, and the shore; they had ceased to be every-day familiar objects. So highly strung did her nerves become as she neared the end of her voyage, that she could scarcely bear even to be spoken to, much less to dilate on the joys of arriving, as her companions now did daily. Like all persons who in early life have had their souls ruffled by harshness, Stella had a want of confidence in strangers, felt an involuntary shrinking from them, and in the moments of a first meeting was apt to grow as brusque as she had formerly been. There was at this moment a passionate longing within her, combating with doubts and fears, one moment she was full of warmth and hope, the next chilled and depressed. "Do you see that long cloud?" asked Captain Hobson of her, as she was leaning over the taffrail watching the quick motion of the ship through the greenish blue waves, wondering at the perpetual motion of the expanse of waters, never, never still, changing momentarily from light to dark, the drops that were below, now above. "Do you see that long low cloud?" asked the captain again. Pale Stella turned on him dreamy eyes, which retained the look of one who had been asking of the waves that question we all ask one day or other of nature—Whence and whither? "That is Jamaica," said the experienced old man, without, however, calling on her for joyousness. She turned a little paler, and replied, "It almost frightens me."

"I have known many say, when land first hove in sight, they were half-sorry, for that as long as they were at sea they felt out of the way of life's troubles; but wait till to-morrow," added the captain, "and you'll be as merry as a cricket, and out of patience to say good-bye to the ship."

The passengers were all on deck early next morning. Mrs. Popplewell, very hot, very happy, very fine. As the ship entered Kingston Harbour crowds of boats put off towards

her. "There's Mr. P——, as I live," cried Mr. P——'s lady.

"There's the Custos, Miss Joddrell," said Captain Hobson. Stella felt blind for an instant, for she could not see the person Captain Hobson was pointing out to her. She could not at all remember what her father was like; her heart beat quite a tattoo. "Where is she?" said a husky voice. Captain Hobson hurried Stella forward, and she found herself in the arms of a gentleman. "Why, Stella, what a thumper you are!" was her father's first speech to her; the tone of admiration somewhat correcting the rather coarse description. Stella felt very awkward; she did not in the least know what to do or to say. Mr. Joddrell was a man about forty years of age, of a naturally fair complexion, that was in a perpetual blister with the sun. Short, stout, very light curly hair, and large blue eyes, like his sister's, Mrs. Dashwood. His dress was very strange to the girl fresh from England. A broad-brimmed Panama hat on his head, the finest and whitest of shirts, with a black ribbon for a cravat, white jean trousers, no waistcoat, short round white jacket, dancing shoes, and pink silk stockings.

Talking all the while on business to Captain Hobson, her father hurried Stella to the side of the ship. At the gangway stood the first mate. Stella held out her hand to him and thanked him for his attention during the voyage. Her father stood by as if he did not see the mate. "Come, come, that will do;" and without giving her a moment to bid adieu to Captain Hobson or any of the passengers, Mr. Joddrell hurried her into a boat. The men at the oars were of course negroes—their clothing of the scantiest; they laughed, showing all their large white teeth at sight of Stella, and bending to their oars at once began to sing—

"New come Buckra,
He get sick,
He take fever,
He be die,
He be die.

New come Buckra," &c.

CHAP. XX.—A CHAIN IS BROKEN.

AT the wharf where Mr. Joddrell and his newly arrived daughter landed, several persons, also in white jackets and round straw hats, were congregated, some called out; "Good day, Custos," but the most were intent on getting a peep beneath Stella's cottage bonnet. Mr. Joddrell handed Stella into a yellow chariot, with black coachmen and footmen in red and blue liveries and cockades in their hats. Stella longed to know where they were going and who she was likely to see, but she was in too great a trepidation to ask. She felt less at ease with her father than she could remember ever to have felt with any one else. "Mrs. Roberts and the Hutchensons invited you to their houses," said Mr. Joddrell, "but I mean to take you to Miss Hawke's lodgings. I don't want all Kingston to be staring at my daughter." Mr. Joddrell spoke in a pompous, husky voice; the normal state of that gentleman's voice was huskiness. "I'll be d—d if you are going to associate with them, a parcel of shopkeepers." What answer could Stella make? The more she tried to think of something to say, the more impossible it became. The town had looked pretty and bright from the harbour, but the streets were full of holes and ruts, worn by heavy rains rather than by traffic; many of the two-storeyed houses, most of them detached, were in want of paint and repair; an air of disorder hung about everything. One or two gigs with tops to them (called "whiskeys") passed, and the inmates invariably raised their hats to the Joddrell equipage. The only other passengers in the streets, at that early hour, were negroes, with baskets of fruits and provisions on their heads, the young women walking with a swinging motion as if their hips were put out of joint with every step, the men in general less lively and active, with ill-formed legs and splay feet. Miss Hawke's lodgings were in East Street. The house was one of the largest and best in the town. Like almost all the Kingston houses, it stood a little back from the street; the small piece of ground in front full of South Sea roses and surrounded by a low wood palisade. A flight of half-a-dozen steps led up to the principal door of entrance; a verandah or piazza closed in by venetian blinds ran along the front and back of the dwelling. In the piazza, from which all light was excluded as much as possible, a tall, fat, brown woman, dressed in a loose,

short, white bedgown and a white petticoat, emerged from a swarm of blacks of all the seven ages of man. In a high-pitched drawling voice Miss Hawke, for Miss Hawke it was, said, "How d'ye do, marm; please to walk up-staars. I 'spects you glad to 'rive at last. Make yerself at home, Miss Joddrell, the Custos and I'se old acquaintances." Miss Hawke being unable, from swelled feet, to walk much about, she called out to a mulatto girl, "Miss Phœbe, you go show Miss Stella her rooms, hearie?" The rooms allotted to Mr. and Miss Joddrell were on the first floor. The one into which Miss Phœbe ushered Stella was very large, and looked all doors and windows; it opened also into a piazza similar in all respects to the one below. "Dat one, young missus' sleeping chamber," said Miss Phœbe, "and dat one for Massa Joddrell," pointing to doors at opposite ends of the room.

There could not well be a more dispiriting introduction to the land of one's birth than the one given to Stella. There was nothing for her to do but to take off her bonnet, and sit down on the cane sofa and wonder and wait. After a little, her father came to her, seemed struck with her appearance, pinched her cheek, said she made him into an old man, gave her the *Kingston Courant* to amuse her, told her to ask for anything she wanted, sorry he could not stay with her, but was obliged to go to the Court-house. Stella thought of aunt Philly's horror of the Jamaica newspaper, with their pictures of runaway slaves; and then as she glanced down the columns, she saw a notice of a negro having absconded from Silver Hill, and it was signed Louis Gautier. Nothing made Stella more aware of being in a new land than that newspaper; the type, the expressions, the advertisements in particular, were as unintelligible to her as though written in a dead language; such a preponderance of Jewish names! Yes, indeed! she was beginning a new life; she was as entirely severed from that which *had* been, as if she had been transported to another planet. There are individuals who go through their lives from birth to death surrounded by the same people and circumstances: some there are, on the contrary, who have their existence divided into periods all distinct the one from the other. This last had been and was to be Stella's case. It was as she sat solitary on the cane sofa, that Stella became perfectly conscious that in truth the links uniting her with her English friends had been violently snapped, never to be perfectly joined again. It was a painful phase to pass through;

the weight of the broken chain made her heart sick. She wished that her father had brought her some message from her stepmother; or even had asked her some question about pretty auntie or the Hubbards: it would have made her feel less lonely. The only object she had to interest her, was that signature of the advertisement from Silver Hill. Every quick, firm step Stella heard coming up the front steps sent the blood coursing more quickly through her veins, made her a little breathless; but it was not till Mr. Joddrell returned at five o'clock alone, that Stella knew how much she had been expecting. She had not allowed it frankly to herself, but she had thought it possible that cousin Louis might have come to Kingston, to welcome her. She was a little like those people in England who, as soon as they are told a person in their company is from Calcutta, begin wondering if he or she knew their brother in Bombay. Silver Hill and Cedar Valley were adjoining plantations, therefore Louis of course must have heard of the signal that the *Marlborough Castle* was off the harbour. At dinner, her father did ask after Mrs. Dashwood, but it was merely an inquiry whether she had grown gray. He wanted to know what fortune aunt Philly had—whether it was inexorably settled on Major Dashwood, wondered why Emily Hubbard was not married, taking all the while glass after glass of wine; by-and-by he grew plaintive about his own affairs; told Stella he wished himself underground, that she and her little brothers would be beggars; and at last, to her terror, laid his head on the table and burst into tears. Stella did not know what to do; her heart did not prompt her: she felt as embarrassed as though he had been a stranger to her; in fact, he was one. At last she went close to him, and, laying her hand gently on his shoulder, said—"It is God's will, dear father, that we should have struggles and sorrows." Mr. Joddrell raised his flushed face, and stared at her. "Nebber, nebber say die," he sung, winking his bloodshot eye at her; then suddenly putting on a grave face, he struck his fist heavily on the table, and added, "I won't have any black-coats in disguise on my premises; so, my girl, if that's the lesson you have learned, just unlearn it again, hear'ee?" Doors and windows being open, Miss Hawke, or some of her adherents, heard what was going on. To Stella's relief, the great lady herself waddled painfully into the room. "Perhaps young lady like to take de air in de garden?" asked Miss Hawke. Stella with great alacrity

answered that she should like it very much. "But I don't like it," stuttered Mr. Joddrell; "she ain't a going to show herself to the whole town. I won't have it."

"Me! gracious me! Custos, how dar you, saar?" exclaimed Miss Hawke, "for what you take me, saar; you think me not hon'rubble lady?"

"Royalty itself, marm," answered his worship the Custos. "Royal elephant!" he added, with drunken gravity. By this time the swarm of blacks had migrated from below, and were peeping in at every opening. Stella could bear the scene no longer; in spite of her father's calling her back, she ran into her bedroom, and fastened every door. Her father's husky stutter, Miss Hawke's high drawl, the clicks of the tongue with which that lady's blacks made known a commiserating sympathy, died away. A knock came to that door of Stella's room which opened into the passage. "Who is there?" asked she, in consternation. "It's Miss Hawke, miss." Stella admitted that large lady, who was distressingly breathless with her late exertions; down she plumped with a groan into one of the chairs. "We all hab our faalts and tharns in de flesh," began Miss Hawke, "but it warn't be pretty for de chile to jidge de parent. Marrow marning, h'm, make pretence you not 'member nutting about it."

Stella could not help opening her heart to Miss Hawke; she said—"Oh! I hope he will not speak to me on the subject."

"Daan't be afeared; he'll be a little snarly, p'raps; men is when dey has been and done wrong. Dese are tribulous times, Miss Joddrell, wid all dis work 'bout dem 'bominable lazy blacks. I wishes de English people had 'em all, dat I docs, to plague der lives out as dey does mine."

Stella learned by this speech what were Miss Hawke's political leanings; she afterwards found that the greatest portion of the free coloured population held the same views. "I hab jist fust-rate English blood in my veins," continued Royal Elephant, "and I can feel for hon'rubble gentleman like Custos Joddrell. Hi! times be changed when der was open 'ouse at Marlborough Castle in old Massa Joddrell's time. Gen'als and Aa'mirals, hoffishers wid long fedders riding dere like mad, wine a swimming like water, and Madam Joddrell, de Custos' moder, so gra-and, dey allus call her de duchess, and now de grandaarter in a lodging; case why, de fine pen let to a rich Jew, nuff to try de patience Job hisself, and all along dem good-for-nothing black debbils!" Click, click!

went Miss Hawke. "Bery well ! dem as lives longest sees mostest."

Miss Hawke now began to heave herself out of her chair. "Where is papa?" asked Stella.

"No need be frightened, eh : De gals hab put him up to bed. Phœbe, she come sleep at yer door, best take a lang rest, h'm ! for ye'll hab to be stirring, I guess, 'fore daan (dawn). You be de bery spittle yer moder."

"Did you know my mother?"

"Hi ! I tink so. I knows all yer fam'ly as I knows my own hond. She quite a chile when she marry ; she hab too much hebben (heaven) in her eye to stay down here lang ; de bestest go de foremost."



CHAP. XXI.—CEDAR VALLEY GREAT HOUSE.

STELLA rose with the thought still in her mind with which she had fallen asleep. Miss Hawke's simple description of her young mother had soothed her ruffled spirit: in dreams, that young mother had come to her child, and she "had heard the lute of hope in sleep, known the voice of love in dreams." Some stars yet lingered in the sky, where darkness was yielding to a pale gray, as Miss Joddrell followed Phœbe down-stairs to her father, who had been some time ready and waiting for her. Stella went up to him with as much of cheerfulness as she could muster. He kissed her, but said, impatiently, "they were too late; the sun would be high before they reached home." Scarcely would he give her time to drink the cup of hot coffee Miss Hawke had sent. They were to drive beyond a certain place, called Half-way Tree, and then ride the rest of the distance. How still everything was, and how strange ! Hedges of prickly pear, so harsh and repulsive, shutting in the dry yellow grass of the pens ; the long, low, wooden houses built on stockades, few of them in good repair ; gates hanging loosely, the side supports sunk into the ground, or rotten ; everywhere marks of decay and neglect. Mr. Joddrell left Stella undisturbed to make her observations ; every five minutes he was putting his head out of the carriage to swear or find some fault. Little by little the sky became stained with brilliant hues, orange and yellow melting into pink. They were driving

through a broad, dry watercourse, thickly sprinkled with tamarisk trees; suddenly every delicate leaf shivered, and so did Stella. The next instant, the sun inundated the atmosphere with light and heat. "D—— it!" was Mr. Joddrell's salutation to the god of day, "we shall be properly roasted."

A little further on, several saddle-horses and black men in Osnaburgh shirts were waiting. The carriage was to be drawn back to Kingston by mules, the horses ridden up to the mountains by two black grooms, for no roads in the island of Jamaica will admit of any vehicle. At least a score of men were at Half-way Tree, for the service of Mr. Joddrell and his daughter. "Young Missus' habit too long," observed one of the blacks, who had a peculiarly intelligent countenance. Mr. Joddrell's observation in return was so like the explosion of a rocket, that Stella did not dare to say she was afraid of the bright-eyed steed prepared for her. Horses at once find out the powers of their rider. Stella had had a dozen lessons in a London riding-school, but how was that to teach her to manage a peculiarly lively animal on a road scarcely three feet wide; on the one side of it a precipice, on the other a mountain like a wall. Stella was scarcely on Pickle's back before the mare, with a squeal and a snort, began to dance on her hind legs. Stella screamed in return, and luckily fell into her father's arms, who was still tucking up her habit. Mr. Joddrell was a particularly good rider, and admired fine horsemanship beyond all things in a woman; it was Miss Georgina Hubbard's riding that had bewitched him. "What made you jerk her head?" he asked, angrily. "She's as quiet as a lamb if you let her alone. Look here!" He leaped into the side-saddle, and raced along the narrow path, throwing his legs alternately right and left, and at last making a collar of them round Pickle's neck. The expressions of admiration drawn forth by this exhibition from his negroes, softened Mr. Joddrell enough to make him hear Stella say she feared she could not manage Pickle with only a laugh of contempt. "Young missus better take old Janet," said the same intelligent negro who had spoken of the length of her habit, meaning a little Spanish Main Jennet intended for a pack-horse. "Very well," said Mr. Joddrell. "Then, Master Charley" (to the negro), "you must ride up Pickle bare back and with a halter, and woe betide you if any harm happens to her."

Stella was only too thankful to be on a beast who lifted one leg after the other in the usual way. The sun, as Mr. Jod-

drell had predicted, was soon high in the heavens, and the light so blinding that Stella had before long to open her parasol; so great was the contention of her mind, occupied with watching every step of her horse, and the dread of the coming of loaded mules (of which she had been told she would be warned by a loud smacking of whips, when she was to find some corner to stand still in), that she had no eyes for the beauty of the scenery around her. After a continued ascent of three hours, they stopped at a small low gate. "Cedar Valley, young missus," said the man before her, turning his head. The path, though still admitting but of one at a time, ran along safely between rows of coffee bushes, and was thoroughly shaded by tall cedar trees.

"How delightful!" exclaimed the relieved Stella; "and oh, how pretty!" as she came to a hedge of China roses, which announced that they were near to the dwelling-house. A murmur like that of a bee-hive was heard, and a rush of blacks took place. "Welcome home, marm; glad to see you, young missus; garamighty glad."

A strange sight it was to the new-comer; half-a-dozen officious hands were at her bridle, half-a-dozen more had hold of Janet's tail, and thus led and pushed along, Stella arrived at the hall door. She slipped down from her saddle as her father came up; he took her hand, and presented her to her stepmother, who was on the threshold of the door. Stella's first glance showed her a pale, pretty woman, but not like Emily Hubbard; no sweet smile, not a bit of Emily's unasked kindness. Mrs. Joddrell might have once possessed both smile and kindliness; if so, living among slaves had destroyed both. It was one of those awkward moments in which children are invaluable auxiliaries. "This is Johnnie," said Mrs. Joddrell, showing a little boy, hitherto half hidden in the folds of her dress. Stella knelt down to bring her head more on a level with that of the child. He was the most beautiful earthly creature she had ever beheld. He had pretty auntie's violet eyes, but with what Miss Hawke had described, as "heaven in them." For a few seconds the boy gazed at Stella, and then, as she opened her arms, he let go his mother's dress and ran into them; she had found something at last to love with all her good heart. Mrs. Joddrell smiled, and said, "Now here is little Wolfe," named so of course after the General. The one-year-old brother was only a pale lump of fat, with a solemn expression. "Did I not say so, Mrs. Joddrell?"

exclaimed a deep voice from one of the windows of the hall. "Why, what is the matter with Miss Portia?" asked Mr. Joddrell.

The dining-hall, such was the Jamaica term, was a very long but rather narrow room; five large windows down the side, looking into a flower-garden, the entrance door at one end, and facing that, at the other extremity, a large bay-window. In the middle one of the range of five windows stood a sedan-chair. It was from thence the deep voice issued. As Mr. Joddrell spoke, the top of the sedan was thrown back, a gaunt old woman rose up in it, as if it were a pulpit, and repeated, "Did I not tell you so, Mrs. Joddrell? I saw them all distinctly—the black-haired girl on the white horse, and French Charles on your mare Pickle. I told you, did I not? that Charles was grinning; I could have counted every one of his teeth. I told you, did I not? that the Custos had a bandana under his straw hat."

"What devil's own nonsense is she talking now?" asked Mr. Joddrell, as he saw his wife's troubled look.

"Miss Lowe thought she saw you all arrive an hour ago," answered Mrs. Joddrell.

"I did not think; I saw," shouted Miss Lowe. "Yes, I saw them all come round the hedge. The tall girl on White Janet; I said, 'She is a brunette, quite a Spaniard,' did I not?" Mrs. Joddrell assented. "And then I said, 'There comes that clever rascal Charles after her, grinning and dancing like a monkey on your pretty Pickle.'" "You did indeed, ma'am," interrupted Mrs. Joddrell, anxiously.

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than our philosophy dreams of," declaimed the old lady; then suddenly to herself, "What, Portia! a Roman, and afraid of ghosts?" and down went the top of the sedan. In a minute one of the glasses was opened, and Miss Lowe called out—

"Miss Joddrell, will you come to me, and let me have a close view of you?" Stella obeyed. "Has an unlucky look about her; hope she'll be fortunate, but don't expect it," muttered Miss Lowe to herself; then aloud, "My dear, I am glad to see you; as tall and as straight as a poplar tree. I am the besom friend of your connections. I am aunt Portia, my dear." Suddenly the speaker put her hand over her left ear. "Go away, go away, there is a draught somewhere; there, there!" and the glass was drawn to with rapidity, then re-opened, and a scraggy hand held out a pamphlet to

Stella. "What do you think of that, child, in this godless house?" It was "Wilberforce on Slavery."

Stella simply thought Miss Portia was out of her mind; but when Mrs. Joddrell went to show Stella her room, she explained that Miss Portia Lowe believed herself, in right of her Scotch mother, to be gifted with second-sight. "One thing can't be denied; she did certainly say you were riding the white Jennet, though I sent down Pickle on purpose for you."

"I suspect, then, that Miss Portia is a very shrewd person," said Stella, "and guessed that no new comer would like to ride a spirited horse on such narrow roads."

"Perhaps, but I had rather she did not see visions about us."

"Does she always live here?"

"Thank heavens, no; she comes and goes, though, as she pleases. She has a little place of her own within a quarter of a mile of our gate, called 'Friendship's retreat;' it was left to her about five years ago by an old miser, who never let any soul within his walls. I believe aunt Portia went through great trials in her youth, and that they have half-crazed her. No one knows anything about her, nor has she ever been heard to mention the name of any one she knew before she came here."

We must here describe Cedar Valley "Great House;" so is called the dwelling of the proprietor of an estate in contradistinction to that of his overseer. It was a wooden building, raised on stockades, with a shingle roof. It was in the form of a T; the long dining-room was the top, out of which, through a door opposite the central one of the five windows, you went into a square hall, dark except from borrowed lights; on either side of this square hall were the bedrooms; the foot of the T was a small drawing-room fitted up luxuriously in English fashion. The room allotted to Stella looked out into the yard—that is, across a space of ground not less than a quarter of an acre—to the barbecues, or stone fields for drying the coffee berry. Out of sight of any of the windows of the Great House, but nearer than the barbecues, were the kitchens, offices, and "the hot-house," the appellation given to the estate hospital for the negroes. Beyond these again were a long row of stables, the pulping-house, the picking-house, and the mill-house—these were all situated on a bank overhanging a pretty rapid river, and most conveniently within reach of the master's eye. "There's your maid," said

Mrs. Joddrell, pointing to a young black woman standing at the window. She knows how to work at her needle. Mind you do not spoil her. As soon as you have taken off your habit we will have breakfast." The white girl and the black girl took a recognisance of each other; they were equally tall, slender, and firm in figure, small feet, small hands, equally fine specimens of their race. Rebecca had not the common negro features; her nose was small, cocked-up, without the diagonally large nostrils; there are as great differences, be it remembered, in black faces as in white. Rebecca's eyes were grave, which is unusual in a negro, and so was her mouth; her expression, indeed, might be said to be sullen. She showed no eagerness to please, waiting on Stella with a certain quiet that had in it something of dignity, but not a grain of cordiality. Stella was quite unprepared for the sight of the breakfast table. It glittered with silver, and glass, and showy china. Meat, fish, piles of unknown fruits and most strange vegetables met her eye. Four men-servants, dressed in suits of spotless Russia duck, were standing in a row at the side-board—four boys, also in white, with long branches of the cocoa-nut tree were fanning away the flies. Mr. Joddrell, instead of his riding-coat, appeared in a fine white flannel dressing-gown; but always with his feet encased in pink silk stockings and pumps. His lady wore a French cambric wrapper, trimmed with broad lace, a French lace cap, satin slippers, and stockings to match her husband's. Where was the poverty, the sad change, over which the Custos had wept yesterday? Miss Portia hurried out of her sedan into a chair round which a small folding screen was drawn. It must be understood that the lady always carried her precautions about with her on her visits. Not a bit of meat, nor fish, nor fruit, would Miss Portia take, nothing but a bit of dry bread and a cup of milk. "I am preparing myself for the times to come," was what she always said in excuse for this hermit's fare. In spite of all the abundance on the table, the Custos found something wanting, and he ordered it to be fetched; and as the servant went rather slower than suited his master's impatience, Mr. Joddrell flung a fork at him, which but narrowly missed its mark. Miss Portia's eyes fixed themselves on the wall opposite to her. "I see the writing," she exclaimed; "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN." The family of which Stella was now a member struck her as really a very strange one, even alarmingly so. Mrs. Joddrell,

so pale, so delicate, so quiet, had not even started when her husband threw so dangerous a missile at the negro, while the grown-up men and the little boys with the cocoa-nut tree branches had all laughed aloud and unchecked, as if they thought it the best sport in the world. Master and slaves were equally out of the pale of the law.

The work of a coffee plantation is never heavy. During nine months of the year there is only light hoeing between the bushes, or the planting out of suckers, and the climate is always bearable in the mountains. It was the infernal system of slavery, it was the absolute control over fellow creatures, which originated cruelty at Cedar Valley. Go wherever despotism is, and you will find, whether on a great scale, as in slave states, or in factories, or even in families, on a small one, there, with the power to do it, comes the wrong. And cruelty, gentle reader, is nourished by cruelty; once the animal in man is roused and gets the upper hand, it will not be appeased without a victim. No one can gauge the amount of ferocity latent in himself, so we had better all of us be on our guard; for, unfortunately, we all have it in our power to be cruel one to another. What an awfully degrading fact to human nature, that we rule more by our evil qualities than by our good ones! Which is the member of a family whose wishes and peculiarities are most attended to? It is the one with a tornado of a temper. And the consequences? The same as in slave communities—cunning and deception.

Mr. Joddrell went off on his horse: flannel dressing-gown and pumps, with the addition of a Panama hat; Miss Portia returned to her sedan and studies; and Mrs. Joddrell took Stella with her to the small drawing-room. "Here are the last novels from Kingston," said Mrs. Joddrell. "You had better do as I do, lie down on your bed, and read till it is time to dress for dinner."

"Had I not better unpack my trunks?" asked Stella.

"Let Rebecca do all that;" and Mrs. Joddrell dawdled away to her own room, with three volumes in her hand. Stella had been surprised at the pomp and luxury of the breakfast-table; now she wondered as to where was that burden of house and children she had been sent for by her father to lighten to her stepmother. The children she neither saw nor heard. The fact of any housekeeping, as understood in England, did not exist. After having been accustomed to aunt Philly's preciseness, after having dreaded for more than

two years Mrs. Hubbard's daily-recurring request of, "Well, girls, help me to think of something for dinner," it was very agreeable certainly to be spared any contention of spirit about the to be or not to be of cold mutton or mutton hash. "One might imagine oneself in the Sleeping Beauty's palace," was Stella's idea, as she obeyed Mrs. Joddrell's advice, and lay down on her bed with a book. Rebecca half closed the jalousies, and knelt down on the floor before a chest of drawers with an open trunk by her side; the black girl's movements were without rustle or noise—the only sound that broke the extreme hush was something like the gentle fall of a summer shower. "Does it rain, Rebecca?" asked Stella.

"No, my young missus; what young missus 'ear is de doctor in de plantain trees."

"The doctor in the plantain trees!" repeated Stella, raising herself on her elbow.

"Sea-breeze de doctor, young missus."

The heat, the quiet, the gentle whisperings of the large green leaves, added to fatigue, soon lulled Stella to sleep. Rebecca, noiselessly as she had pursued her task, no sooner perceived this than she sat perfectly still, watching the sleeper's lovely small face, so tranquil, with the long dark lashes, which softened the large eyes, now lying heavily on a cheek flushed by sleep to the colour of the sunny side of a peach, the lips parted, and the breathing as regular and calm as that of a child—gazing at the graceful unconscious pose of the whole figure, the slender foot. What were Rebecca's thoughts as her eyes dwelt on that sight? Had she any idea of comparing herself in her Osnaburgh shift, squatting on the floor, her gaudy cotton petticoat, her bare feet, with that delicate beauty to whom had been given despotism over her? Did any thought cross her of why should there be such a difference in their lots? God knows. The sleeper and the watcher were in their relative positions, when the sun in the heavens told the drivers of the various gangs of negroes working in the fields that it was four o'clock. Suddenly the air was broken by the crack of a whip. Stella sprang up with a start; another crack, then another. "What is that? what is that?" screamed rather than spoke the white girl. "Don't, don't let them do it," and as she was, her hair all dishevelled, before Rebecca could stop her, Stella was in the dining-hall.

"I say you, Stella Joddrell, what's wrong?" cried Miss

Portia, opening her sedan, and catching hold of the panting girl. Stella was nearly in hysterics.

"I say, *you* stupid," cried Miss Portia to Rebecca, who had run after her young mistress, "what's come over her?"

"Me no sabey, Missy Lowe; young missus sleep, and whip he wake her."

"Wake up, girl! you've been dreaming, child," said Miss Portia, giving Stella a good shake.

Stella whispered: "It is not any punishment, is it?"

"What's the row?" asked Mr. Joddrell, coming in from his ride round his plantation.

"Your daughter from England has been scared out of her senses by the cracking of your drivers' whips; I always told you, Custos, it had a bad effect on one's nerves."

It was before dinner, and so Mr. Joddrell was tolerably patient. "She'll get used to it," he said. "Georgy," meaning his wife, "used to jump like a young colt at first; she don't mind it now. Why didn't you tell your young mistress that it was only the signal to bring up grass, you ninny?" turning to Rebecca. "Come now, Stella, dry your eyes and don't be silly; the niggers don't mind a little tickle-toby; half of 'em would take a dozen for a fippenny bit."

"The Lord forgie ye for leeing, Custos," said Miss Portia.

Stella, rather ashamed of her escapade, went back to her room to dress for dinner. That meal was in keeping with the breakfast; and then for a short hour of light before the setting of the sun, the whole party, except Miss Portia, walked out.

"Come and see Mammy Venus," said little Johnnie, who had come in to dessert.

"Johnnie wants to go to the negro huts," said Mrs. Joddrell: and, as if it were a matter of course, Johnnie was obeyed.

Father's and mother's hearts were wrapped up in that child. You would have said he was their only one. To Johnnie alone of all created beings was Mr. Joddrell yielding and self-sacrificing; as for Stella, Mr. Joddrell made no show of fatherly feeling towards her; he took her as part of his belongings. Mrs. Joddrell treated her as a visitor, but Johnnie manifested a very decided preference for his sister. He refused his mother's hand, a ride on his father's shoulder, to walk by Stella's side. Every time she spoke to him, he looked at her with his angel's eyes, and with a smile that made

Stella adore him. The negro huts were congregated in a rather picturesque spot, shadowed by cocoa-nut trees; two lofty Areca palms, commonly called cabbage-trees, from the nature of the large fruit they bear, marked out the site from a considerable distance. Some of the huts had small gardens, but the provision grounds were in another part of the property. To the new arrival, the huts without windows seemed like dark caverns, but they were in reality tolerably comfortable, well thatched, and otherwise in good repair. Mr. Joddrell prided himself very much on his negro huts; they were one of the sights he took strangers to see. Mammy Venus was supposed to be nearly a hundred years old; her woolly knots of hair were white as snow, her teeth gone, her eyes glazed, and she was besides bent very nearly double. It was astonishing that Johnnie was not afraid of so hideous a figure, but he was not. As soon as the old woman crept out of her hut at Mr. Joddrell's call, the child went to her, put his little, soft, dimpled, white hand on hers, shrivelled like a mummy's, and scraped his foot as he saw the negro boys do to his father. Venus mumbled something; then leaning both her skinny hands on her stick peered first into Stella's face, then into that of Mr. Joddrell. "Well, mammy," he said, "fine young girl, eh?" Venus's whole body shook with laughter, but you heard no sound; then she got close to Mr. Joddrell. "Get hubby for her—quick—quick, plenty o' fine young men."

"Where do you see them, mammy?"

"Dere, dere, fine niggers," pointing to a group who had come out to stare at the company, and she began her internal laughter again.

"Come away," said the Custos; "she's an impudent old jade; take care, mammy, or——;" and he shook his stick at her. The old creature tottered to the door of her hut, then lifted up her crutch, and shook it back again at him with a look of fury both laughable and terrible.

"I'll be hanged if I don't have her tried as an Obeah woman, if she lives much longer," said Mr. Joddrell.

The evening was spent by the Custos in pacing up and down the long hall, refreshing himself with glass after glass of *sangaree*, listening to his wife's singing. "Now, Stella, let us hear you," he said. Stella played her last waltzes, but she was no great pianist, and she was too timid to venture on a song. "Can't you sing, some of you, the British Grenadiers or Rule Britannia?" cried the Custos. He did not

know one tune from the other, though he had a musical wife. He went off to bed singing, "Britons never, never shall be slaves." Thus ended Stella's first day at Cedar Valley. No one had so much as pronounced the name of Gautier.

CHAP. XXII.—A DOVE IN A CROW'S NEST.

THE next day, and the next, passed in the same heavy monotony. Within the Great House there was a regularity of doing nothing except eating, drinking, and sleeping, such as could not fail to produce a stupefying of heart and intellect. Stella felt by the end of the third day like one of those state prisoners who, confined in a room luxuriously furnished, with every aid to charm the senses, sees with horror the silken-hung walls each day approach him nearer and nearer, and feels, while he yet enjoys air and space, the tortures of suffocation. There was a resemblance to a prison also in the constant presence of another person, night and day. Rebecca was in her room during the day, as Stella had as yet no work to give her, sitting or standing like a sentinel of black granite; at night, actually under the young lady's bed, which often heaved with the black sleeper's turns and throes. On her arrival at Cedar Valley, Stella, in her first feeling of shyness and reserve, had not inquired about Louis or his mother. She had taken it for granted that, being near neighbours of her father, she should be constantly seeing them; she had expected to find the name of Gautier quite a household word in her home. Not only were they Mr. Joddrell's nearest neighbours, they were also his nearest, nay only relations in the island, and the two families, so she had argued, would naturally be each other's resource for society. But the days passed without the slightest allusion to the family at Silver Hill, and the courage did not come to Stella to broach the subject. Strange the effect of distance, the distance of time as well as of the horizon, how it softens and beautifies. Stella looked back, and felt as if the past had been full of happiness; she recalled the time she had spent at Waterloo Cottage, at the Hubbards', nay even at Evian, and her heart quite melted within her. Every one she had known at any of these places came circling round her, and the recollection of words and acts, unfelt, unvalued, when done or spoken, rose

up, and gave her a yearning like that of the traveller in the desert for one sip of the muddy water he had scorned on his first day's travel. Is life, then, always an alternation between regret and longing? Stella's thoughtful eye, as she asked herself this sad question, wistfully met that of Rebecca. "What young missus wish?" asked the negro girl. Stella smiled. "I believe I want something to do, Rebecca."

"Young missus can go play music."

Stella shook her head; then, with girlish longing for fraternization, she began to talk. "Rebecca, who manages the house? do tell me; and who orders the dinner, and looks after everything?"

"Auntie Manie, young missus, she be 'ousekeeper, and do ebery ting. Massa, he order beef and turtle, and all massa want from dem stores in Kingston. Big missus no need to worry at all 'bout dat."

A pause: then Stella went on, "Is there any church near?"

"B'lieve dem kind a one up near Saunders' place."

"Don't you know whether papa and Mrs. Joddrell go to church?"

"Hi! young missus, what negro like me know? No call for I to know any ting."

"But you surely have heard of God and Jesus Christ?"

"Nuff to do without troubling 'bout dem tings. Dey brings no good, else punishment."

There was an impassiveness in Rebecca that repulsed Stella's every advance. "Where are the children all day?"

"In swing in garden, young missus."

"I will go to them," said Stella, springing off the bed. "I cannot bear this any longer."

Rebecca guided her to a spot shaded by a wide-spreading mango tree, near a bamboo hedge which screened that part of the garden from one of the roads to the house. Between two poles was slung a grass hammock, in which Johnnie was lying. The little fellow clapped his hands when he saw Stella, crying out, "Come, Miss Ella; come, swing with me." Stella got in beside him, and the nurses swung the brother and sister gently, singing the while with their soft, pathetic voices. Johnnie amused himself with pelting his companion with some of the red blossoms of the pomegranate he had had to play with. The black women, with their extreme sensitiveness to external beauty, extemporized songs (as is their wont on all occasions, pleasant or unpleasant)

about the beautiful pair in the swing. The singing, the child's laughter, and the young girl's, served to mask the approach of a visitor. Perhaps this person had stood for five minutes looking over the hedge at the group, before he was himself seen. "Hi! I 'spects it Massa Louis," exclaimed one of the nurses. Louis was come at last; in an instant, Stella was out of the hammock. Louis shook hands with her in silence, and for a minute or two neither of them seemed to have a word to say.

"I only heard of your being at Cedar Valley last evening," began Louis.

"How are you all?" asked Stella.

"My mother is never strong," replied Louis. "And for years she has not paid a visit."

"Oh! indeed, I never expected aunt Gautier to come and see me," said Stella, very earnestly. "I should have wished to have gone to see her at once, but I did not like to propose it."

Neither of the cousins named Madame Olympia; they both perfectly remembered what had been said about her at the cottage. Louis considered Stella's undefined inquiry a sequel to that conversation; and Stella felt awkward and vexed that he should not have accepted what she meant for an advance. When people once get on a wrong tack with one another, it is astonishing how far a misunderstanding will go. How every word and act will be mistaken, and each lament over the other's misconception; neither supposing it possible that he may be judging his neighbour wrongfully. Louis was carrying Johnnie—all children and animals loved Louis—and the cousins were walking towards the house just as if they had been meeting every day of the two years and upwards they had been separated. "You seem quite at home, already," observed Louis.

"Not quite," was soberly answered; then with sudden frankness—"I am very glad to see you, for you will give me some idea of how to employ my time usefully."

"Cannot you be satisfied with being ornamental?"

"For the sake of the coffee bushes?" asked Stella, with an archness Louis had never before remarked in her.

Instead of proceeding to the hall-door, Louis and Stella turned back on their steps. "Are you supplied with none of those resources young ladies boast of as fitting them for retirement?"

"I was a great trial to my music masters," replied Stella.

"Besides, I cannot be making a noise in a wooden house where quiet, even sleep, is so courted during the day; and as for reading, excepting some old-fashioned novels, I can only find 'Blair's Sermons,' 'Blackstone's Commentaries,' and 'Andrews' Late War.'"

"I always feared you would be lonely here, but you will be indemnified when the family move down to Spanish Town for the gay season. What with the governor's balls and private parties, you will not have a minute to yourself."

Stella looked at him with smiling eyes. "But I never do dance."

"Nonsense! a crochet you will soon get rid of."

"Very good sense. Every one has their prejudice; that's mine, cousin Louis;" her feeling of strangeness was already weary away.

It was the first time she had called him by her old name for him; there was quite a change in the tone of his voice, and a half-smile appeared at the corners of his mouth, as he replied. "Then I do not know what's to be done for you."

"I really am not a child now, cousin Louis," went on Stella, drawing up her slender figure to its full height, "and I cannot help feeling and thinking that I might do some good here."

"In what way?"

"That is just what I want you to tell me. I have no one else I dare to ask. When papa sent for me to come out to Jamaica, he wrote that he was not nearly so rich as he used to be, and—and—he cried about it the first day I saw him, and declared we should all be beggars."

"Very probable, if things go on as they are likely to do."

"But then I ought not to be idle all day——"

"Hallo! come here, you two," cried out aunt Portia. "How long do you mean to go on chattering and keep me waiting?"

At the hall-door was standing Miss Portia, a stick under her arm, a thick bandana tied over her ears, a man's hat over that; exactly the costume often adopted by negro men and women. Miss Lowe was a person who had lived a long life of dependence, and who now in her old age, rejoicing in the possession of freedom and a small competence, would submit to but few of the restraints of civilized life. She went where she liked, and wherever she went she did as she liked; never altering a single habit for the biggest grandee in

Jamaica. Sooth to say, she kept herself so out of everybody's way, she was so self-sufficing, and on occasions so kind and useful, that in general no one grudged her the room for her sedan-chair. Besides, the most open-handed hospitality was a West Indian attribute. Miss Portia's exterior was harsh, and, at first sight, unpleasing; but the plainness of her features was redeemed by the look of thought and resolution on her countenance. The worst that malevolence could accuse her of was a fondness for news and back-gammon. "Well, Massa Louis," says Miss Lowe, "what's your opinion of Joddrell's girl?" Without waiting for a reply, she goes on, "You're like me, I suppose, full of wonder to find an eaglet in the nest of a crow?" Aunt Portia revelled in speaking out her mind; it was the revenge she took for half a century of enforced silence. If all her history had been known, no wonder Miss Lowe read "Wilberforce on Slavery;" no wonder Miss Lowe spoiled her slaves. The heavy fines on manumission had alone prevented her, in the very hour of inheriting, from bestowing their freedom on them; had she done so she must have starved, but by her will she had given them her coffee plantation and their freedom. "Good-by, girl," to Stella; "I ain't got no advice to give you but to keep as you are; it's a God's mercy when a Christian strays hither. Louis Gautier, as I pass, I'll send word to Silver Hill that I left you here safe till to-morrow."

"I am going back to-night."

"Hoots! you don't know when you are well off. Stay and make company for the young lady."

Miss Lowe's bearers appearing, she got into her sedan, and away she was carried; she never troubled herself with leaving-taking. That evening, after dinner, Louis was strolling by himself round the house; as he passed an open window, he heard a very pleasant voice, with a good deal of tone in it, say the following words:—

"Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are;
Up above the earth so high,
Like a diamond in the sky."

Johnnie's voice joined in, repeating the last word of every line with a sort of musical cadence. Louis looked up at the sky; how diamond-studded it was! "That is heaven,

Johnnie," said the pleasant voice, "and a good God lives there, and made the pretty stars, and takes care of Johnnie."

"And of dadda and mamma?" was asked in baby tones.

"Yes."

"And the poor little rabbits, and Baba's piccaninies?" (his black nurse's children).

"Yes."

"Johnnie loves the good God up among the stars."

Louis walked on because his heart was too softened to listen longer. What a divine picture of a mother and a child floats before him; it is the first time he has ever thought of Stella as a woman. What a picture of purity! Miss Portia's eaglet is surely a dove. Folly! he tell her how to be useful! Louis Gautier felt as a man may do, who, scorched and parched, finds himself in a shady path by the side of a noble, calm-flowing river. When he would have re-entered the dining-hall, the sight of Mr. Joddrell sitting on one chair, his legs on another, sipping from a tumbler, the fumes from which betrayed it to be rum, drove Louis back into the air. He wandered away by the side of the hedge of roses, caressing his visions, away past the barbecues, until he found himself close upon the negro huts. Hark! he certainly hears a murmur; is it the sound of the river? He thinks not. He steps softly forward; a light in Mammy Venus's house, a voice speaking on without interruption—a prayer-meeting, no doubt. The planter threatened in his interests took the upper hand of the man of sentiment. All assemblies of negroes between sunset and sunrise were strictly forbidden by law; religious assemblings more bitterly punished by the masters than any other, because the missionaries, who preached or prayed at them, were accused of exciting their flocks to insurrection. Louis, without hesitation, without thinking that he was one against a multitude, tried to push open Venus's door; it resisted for a little, then yielded. Not a light, not a sound, except the old woman's hard breathing. Louis was not deceived; he was as satisfied as if he had been a witness to it, that either there or close at hand there had been a gathering of the negroes. His approach must have been signalled by one of their sentinels. For an instant he felt the vexation of being outwitted, then he took his way back to the Great House, resolved not to give the conspirators the pleasure of seeing his discomfiture. Presently he stumbled over a bundle or lump of earth. "I know what the

rogues are after," thought he. "I wager this is an obi; they know their master, but they don't know me." He kicked the obstacle, whatever it was, under a coffee-bush, then took out his knife and cut off a branch that he might recognize the spot again. "Poor Stella!" he said, half-aloud, "drunkenness, luxury, indolence, superstition for your mates—will the eagle soar clear above it all? the dove keep her feathers unsmirched?"

When Mr. and Mrs. Joddrell heard from Louis his suspicions that there had been a prayer-meeting at the negro huts—Louis did not mention the obi, that was a personal affair—Stella's blood ran chill in her veins at the explosion of their anger. Her father's husky oaths and threats did not impress her with the same horror as her stepmother's violence. That pretty, delicate, young wife, Johnnie's mother, raved at her husband for his stupidity, at the book-keeper for laziness; she wanted her husband to go at once to the negro houses and have them searched. As Mr. Joddrell, sleepy with his potations, demurred, her upbraidings increased in severity;—"That's always the way here, Mr. Gautier; everything left to take its own course."

Mr. Joddrell said to Louis—"You hear her?" then to his wife, doggedly—"You haven't a grain of sense in you. What would you have me do at this time of night?"

"Do! why, nothing. I admire your prudence!"

Mr. Joddrell swore long and fiercely at her. After thunder and lightning came a heavy fall of rain.



CHAP. XXIII.—REBECCA'S WARNING.

THAT night, when Stella went into her room, she found Rebecca asleep on a mat at the foot of the bed. "No wonder," thought the white girl, looking pitifully down on the black one, with the same wish she had often had on seeing a lark in a cage—the wish to open the door and say, "Fly away." Stella went about her night toilette with a soft step, so as not to disturb the slave girl. She was very restless and sleepless. She had had a great joy, but underlying it was now something like disappointment. She wished Louis had not mentioned conjectures founded on such slight evidence. Stella was right. She was no longer a child. She

was reflecting, confusedly if you will, but still with a true perception, on the terrible effects of slavery, not on the blacks alone, but on the whites. Ah ! indeed, the sacred rights of all God's creatures cannot be invaded with impunity. For the first time the consequences touched her home. Insecurity, suspicion, fear, dogged the step of the planters. She only fell asleep after the first cock-crow. It certainly was not five o'clock when a soft voice, that she did not at once recognize, spoke close to her ear : " Young missus, Miss Ella." Sleep would not be banished. Stella heard, indeed, but had no power to answer. Again a more earnest appeal. " Miss Ella, my young missus." " Oh, that weary riding, how I hate it !" moaned Stella. Mr. Joddrell, in his disgust at Stella's poor horsemanship, had desired that she should rise at five each morning, and ride the old jennet up and down the cedar avenue, that she might become familiarized to the saddle. He proposed to be her master himself, but on the one occasion that she had been late and come across him, his lesson had been so severe to both her and White Janet, that Stella had ever after made a point of getting her ride over before Mr. Joddrell's time for appearing abroad. She was not surprised, therefore, at the pale light when Rebecca awoke her, only very lazy. As she asked, " Is it really time to get up, Rebecca?" the slave girl put her finger to her lips, then almost inaudibly said—" Young missus, please no ride this morning. Massa Louis get up ; he go find obi. Stella knew what obeah was. " Young missus, go beg him hard, else bad come, he no say anything more 'bout last night." Rebecca did not waste words, but hurried her young lady's dressing, in a way very contrary to her usual dragging slowness. It was this manner which gave Stella the idea that it was important to prevent Louis from bringing forward any further proof or accusation in addition to the one he had already made. It never struck Stella that it was strange Rebecca should be so well informed on the subject. Rebecca's hand trembled as she gave the young lady her muslin garden-hat. " Go, go, quick, young missus ; but no walk on obi ; hearie, young missus?" Stella reached the hall door just in time to see Louis striding past the barbecues ; without hesitation she ran after him, calling on his name ; he stopped, smiled ; how could the gravest or most incensed planter have helped it, at a sight as sweet as the roses beside him bathed in the sparkling morning dew. " Early afoot, Stella."

"I have come to ask you a favour, cousin Louis."

"Now, what can it be?" he asked, with a pleased look at the blooming girl.

Stella involuntarily used Rebecca's very words: "Don't go find obeah."

He stopped. "Ah! how did you know anything about that?"

"Rebecca, my maid, told me," answered Stella, simply. Louis made no observation, and the two walked on together. Stella saw by the stern mouth that her favour had not been granted. Now it so happens that never does opposition excite more than when a young man makes a young lady feel the small extent of her power. Stella did not give the matter up. They reached the coffee-bush from which Louis had cut a branch; with his stick he hunted out the obnoxious mass composed of human hair, of feathers, and of bones. "Cousin Louis, give me that, and I'll give you these two bonny, bonny roses." Stella held towards him two half-blown roses glittering with dew, which she had just picked. Cousin Louis saw not only the bonny roses; he saw also the lovely hand that held them, no longer the thin child's hand, but a hand with dimples, and with that prettiest of lines when it is pretty, the one that joins the wrist and hand.

"You cannot refuse my first present, my first request."

Louis was only a man after all; he took the flowers, though not very graciously. "I do not like bribes," he said; he might have added, he never liked yielding.

Stella stooped down to take up the obeah, to throw it out of sight. "Don't," exclaimed Louis, violently; he knocked it to pieces with his stick, saying, "See what evil communication does. I felt quite superstitiously afraid of your touching that nonsensical composition." Stella looked at him with grateful eyes. Poor child! that look might have told any one how unaccustomed she was to be cared for. The sun had not yet risen above the mountains to the north-east enclosing Cedar Valley; there was still the freshness of night in the air. Louis walked on; and Stella made no objection; little green lizards peeped from beneath and behind stones, though it was yet too early for them to venture out; once or twice, a jet-black lark with yellow shoulders, called by the negroes "banana bird," darted from its hiding-place, and the fiery red bee-eater glanced like a flash of light among the dark green bushes; everything was novel to Stella. "It is very

different here from England," she observed ; "it is more beautiful. I think I could be very happy here, cousin Louis."

"And only yesterday you were complaining."

"So I was," she agreed at once, "but to-day it feels charming ; how glossy the leaves of the coffee are, how well they set off the red berries ; to-day I am quite determined to be happy." They had been for some time going down a gentle slope which ended in a holm. Several cows were grazing there, and the river hereabouts had shrunk into the size of a brook in the middle of the wide watercourse. Louis found a seat for his companion and himself under a high columnal piece of rock, standing alone like an ancient God Terminus.

"Do you see that pathway, that steep narrow road on the other side of the river ?" asked Louis. "That is the road to Silver Hill."

"And is it far to Silver Hill ?"

"No ; about two hours' ride from Cedar Valley : but I did not bring you here merely to show you that road ; it was to be out of the way of eavesdroppers while I gave you some advice. You asked me yesterday to do so, you remember. Look at this rock, Stella, it fell from the mountain above ; this piece of pasture is a land slip ; our social position in Jamaica is as uncertain as our soil, and it behoves every one, even a girl like you, to be guarded in your actions for the sake of the general weal. You were distressed at my telling your father of my suspicions last evening ; I read your feelings in your face. It was not for the sake of discovering who had been gathered together that I spoke ; it was to give notice to all concerned, that we, the masters, were for ever on our guard. Our safety depends on our allowing of no associations." Stella had no power now to reproduce her reflections of last night ; she sat listening like a pupil to a respected teacher.

"I have a shrewd guess," went on Mr. Gautier, "as to what you meant, by saying you wished to employ yourself usefully. Teaching the negroes, is it not ?—reading the Bible to them—in short, playing the Lady Bountiful ; that is all very well for aunt Portia."

"Does she do so ?" interrupted Stella.

"Yes, in her way ; she is old, and has a little bit of a place, and scarcely two score of negroes. She is considered

mad ; besides she is a stranger, and no one pays any attention to what she does. A very different matter if *you* set out on the same course, the daughter of one of our chief magistrates, and a man of weight in the island. You will fall into a stormy sea of troubles, and the least of your difficulties will not be those you find at home."

"But, cousin Louis, would *you* think me wrong?"

"Yes, and no ; it is womanly to feel for the oppressed race, for I allow they are an oppressed race. If I were to be the only sufferer by emancipation, believe me, Stella, there should be no slaves this day."

"I am so glad to hear you say that, cousin Louis ;" the tone of her voice proved how glad ; her glance told him he was quite a hero in her eyes.

"But hear me to the end," he said. "Don't give me credit for being better than I am. Not that I think emancipation is to be a blessing to the blacks, but because by our own ignorance and passions we have rendered all internal administration of the colony for any one's benefit impossible. I say nothing of the misunderstanding of our position on the other side of the water. When it is too late, it will be discovered that the blacks of these islands are too degraded a set of beings to benefit by freedom."

"That is only because they have been so long slaves," said Stella.

"Partly, but only partly. However, understand my position, Stella : my lot has been cast among a class, the majority of which is respectable, and whose rights are trifled with. Having put my shoulder to the wheel with them, I will *not* withdraw it until the day is fairly won or fairly lost."

Louis paused. What a contrast the pastoral scene around them to the subject of their conversation ! "What were you going to advise me about, cousin Louis?" said Stella, as Mr. Gautier, with a chafed look, kept silence. Party spirit had driven all but its own suggestions from his memory.

"Not to meddle with the negroes," he said, promptly. "Employ yourself as you would do were you still happily in England."

"Would you have wished me to stay in England, cousin Louis?"

Ah ! Eve, Eve ! always wanting to eat of the tree of knowledge !

"No doubt," was the concise, clear answer. Men and women are as different as possible.

Stella had been so pleased to listen to Louis, to be considered by him worthy of an explanation of his sentiments and situation. She was inclined to be so docile to his lessons, contented to submit to his guidance, even to be found fault with; she was vulnerable only when he so distinctly told her that he would rather she had been far away. And yet Louis was honestly preferring her welfare and comfort to his own satisfaction; for his heart was warmed, was awakened to the pleasure of having cousin Stella near him. Women in general do not appreciate too well the sort of disinterestedness which seems to dispense with them. The walk back was in silence; when they came in sight of the Great House, Louis said, "Tell Rebecca, from me, to take care what she is about. Had she been where she ought to have been last night, how did she know of my finding the obi in my path?"



CHAP. XXIV.—SILVER HILL.

No persons in the world fall so easily under the guidance and influence of their inferiors and servants as those with either despotic or egotistical natures. It must be so; for one extreme requires the balance of the other; tyranny at all events *must* mate with servility. Mr. and Mrs. Joddrell, in spite of occasional domestic tempests, enjoyed a wonderful reciprocity of sentiments and tastes. They held themselves aloof from the society within their reach as though they had been archangels and principalities. Mrs. Joddrell never put off her wrapper, Mr. Joddrell his flannel dressing-gown, while they were at Cedar Valley, unless they went out for a ride. Then they were equipped and escorted like a king and queen: horses with long nets and silver-mounted bits, bridles, and stirrups; a groom in red and blue preceding, two more in blue and red following them. Nothing less than the king and queen of hearts, say you. Imagine meeting such a set-out in some lonely wild mountain road in the Tyrol. Such a sight was more out of place in the Jamaica highlands, and with the tottering fortunes of the equestrians. The Governor and his lady and the Commander-in-Chief had once been Mr. Joddrell's guests at Marlborough Castle, and since then the Custos and

his wife had become more than ever addicted to solitude, dressing-gowns, and the society of their slaves, while up at their mountain residence. The head nurse was Mrs. Joddrell's resource, and one of the black drivers of his negroes furnished her husband with a highly spiced dish of gossip. All the vulgar scandal of their estate, and of the abutting estates, reached the lady and gentleman through such channels. When Stella arrived at Cedar Valley, it might have been supposed that Mrs. Joddrell would have been glad of a companion whom she could consider her equal. Some one has said that "it requires a great force of character to isolate yourself from the social atmosphere in which you live;" this force had not been granted to Georgiana Hubbard. Four years only as Mr. Joddrell's wife, and as the mistress of slaves, had changed her so, that she had lost all semblance of her former moral being. She could not now be troubled with equality, and the self-control it imposes. So the black nurse remained the favourite: and with the cunning of her calling, she understood that she might, with all security, depreciate Miss Joddrell. "Young missus' arm no like my missus' arm." This was the day after Stella's arrival, when Mrs. Joddrell, lying on the bed with her novel, had asked Nancy her opinion of the young lady.

"Ah! Nancy, youth is a great thing. I was very different from what I am now, when I married."

"Lordy, Lordy, what missus would have? Why, we ebbery one 'bsarves, young miss no can 'old candle to big missus—*she* so buful *white*: dem girls wid der black hair don't nebber last; dey looks dry as wood, bery soon."

This being uncontradicted, nurse did not hesitate to tell, how "Miss Stella get up so airly, and run after Massa Louis."

"Is Miss Joddrell gone out with Mr. Gautier?"

"True for you, marm—she bin gone more dan dis two 'our." Nurse adds, "My part, me tinks dere someting in it. Dat Becka a bery cunning gal—her face tan like tar-apple leaf (is like a star-apple leaf): it hab two color."

"If you have anything to say, say it," exclaimed Mrs. Joddrell.

"Nurse didn't warnt to get de gal in trouble, but it war her dooty to tell missus—wid her two eye she seed Becka a getting in young missus' window quite black night yesterday.

"Go and call her to me."

"Where were you last night?" asked Mrs. Joddrell, when Stella's maid was brought before her.

"Me, me, good missus; me no whares."

"No use lying, Rebecca: tell me at once where you were coming from, when you got in through Miss Joddrell's window."

"Me no whares, missus."

"Very well," said Mrs. Joddrell; "take her, nurse, to Mr. Boggis" (the book-keeper), "and desire him from me to put her in the stocks till she chooses to tell the truth."

"No need send any one wid me. I take de message bery well myself," said Rebecca, with unmoved tranquillity. She walked away with a scornful air, and had herself put in the stocks.

"I'll teach her to cut her eye at me. I'll see if I can't take that spirit out of her before I have done," said Mrs. Joddrell.

Stella rather wondered not to find Rebecca when she returned; but she made no inquiries, fearful of getting the girl into disgrace. Mrs. Joddrell said nothing on the subject either. Breakfast passed over pleasantly; the boys fanned away the flies, and there was nothing missing to provoke an outburst of wrath from Mr. Joddrell. Of course, while the negro-servants were present, all allusion to Louis' suspicions of a prayer-meeting was avoided. "I'll ride with you, Gautier," said Mr. Joddrell, "I have something on which I wish to consult you."

"What do you say to a ride, Georgina," turning to his wife, "you and Stella?"

"Oh! I can't go; but if Stella does not mind being burned a little browner, my not going need not stop her."

"Be quick then, girl," said the papa; "if you are not ready when the horses are, we shall not wait for you."

"Please, papa, to let me ride old Janet!"

"But Janet must be tired already," said the Custos.

"I did not ride this morning, papa. I had a walk with my cousin."

Mrs. Joddrell looked, or intended to look, a reproof to Stella; but her stepdaughter was too much occupied with the idea of going to Silver Hill, to have perceptions for any other subject. "Go along with you for a coward as you are," was Mr. Joddrell's way of consenting to Stella's request.

Still no Rebecca—Stella was in such haste, that she did

not give much thought to the matter, for she had not yet lost the habit of waiting on herself. On her return to the hall, Mr. Joddrell remarked, "Well got up, ain't she, Gautier?"

"If I may venture to advise," said Louis, "it would be that instead of that smart little hat, you should wear the large one you had on this morning. It will not look so well, but it will be more comfortable."

"I do not care for looks," said Stella, running back to her room to make the change.

"I wonder how long she'll be so good-natured," whispered Mr. Joddrell. "What angels women are before they are married!"

There can be very little riding abreast on the mountain roads of Jamaica: riders are obliged to go in file. Louis went first, Stella next, Mr. Joddrell last; this day Mr. Joddrell dispensed with the men in livery—he was incog. Stella, more accustomed to her steed, ventured now and then to give a glance at the scenery. The only sounds that broke the stillness were the strokes of distant hoes on the dry, loose ground. The sky was one blaze of light, not a leaf trembled, the palm-trees were motionless. Once across the river, now at its shallowest, the road wound round a mountain, passing under great toppling, red and gray rocks, all draped with creeping and climbing plants. No one on the path could be seen from above; while below so sheer was the precipice that the eye plunged to the bottom. Very often Stella felt as if hanging over the abyss. "Keep your eyes between your horse's ears, Stella," cried Louis, turning round on his saddle to look at her. She had almost screamed to see his careless movement. "After you have been two or three times to see us, you will not think anything of a gallop here." The road suddenly made a sharp elbow, and once more Louis turned his head, and raising his switch, pointed before him. A circular hill rose before them, a wave of verdure, rising out of a broad deep ravine. On the plateau at the summit was the Gautiers' dwelling. It was small, not half the size of the one at Cedar Valley; of wood, painted white, like all the mountain houses in Jamaica. A luxuriant jessamine overrun the porch, and strayed on either side; oleanders, myrtles, orange-trees, in large tubs, were ranged on a terrace. Altogether there was an air of French rather than West Indian taste about the house, so that it reminded Stella of Evian. At the bottom of the hill, Louis blew the whistle at his button-hole, dis-

mounted, setting his horse at liberty with the single word "stables," and away trotted Kaled. A female figure appeared on the steps leading up to the porch. "Welcome to Silver Hill, cousin Stella," said Louis, taking hold of the young lady's rein, and guiding Janet up the steep zigzag. Any one can imagine the little flurry of Stella's spirits, the half-pleasure, half-uneasiness, conscious as a delicate-minded girl would be of having given cause of offence to that lady she guessed was now waiting on the threshold of Louis' home to receive her. "Is this Stella?" said a sweet voice, interrogatively.

"Yes, this is your niece," answered Louis.

Madame Olympia had embraced Stella, and led her through the piazza into a sitting-room, and Stella had not yet seen her mother's sister. She was actually afraid to look. "Maman," said Louis—he had always called his mother thus—"Maman, here is Stella come to see you. Stella, this is the Maman." Mrs. Gautier, a short lady in black, with a widow's cap, came forward, and held out her hand to Stella; but Stella, moved by some instinct, put her arms round the old lady's neck. The girl's eyes eagerly sought the face of cousin Louis' mother, and there she found, not only a likeness to the son, but an unexpected resemblance to old Mrs. Joddrell. Poor grandmamma! her sad, stern face seemed to reappear before Stella. Poor grandmamma, with all her sternness, was the only parent Stella had ever known. She had come to feel this, and many a recollection of her girlhood's wayward temper struck like a stone against her heart. With timid hesitation, the Maman kissed her sister's grandchild. There was nothing beyond a gentle courtesy in Mrs. Gautier's manner, and yet Stella clung to her already. Stella heard her father's husky voice saying, "Well, Mrs. Olympia, how goes it with you? Madame Gautier, your humble servant," and then she forced her eyes to seek Olympia. Madame Olympia was at this period some six or seven and thirty years of age. She had lost the freshness and the round contours of youth; her large black eyes were rather sunk, and round them a shade of bistre; but her pale countenance possessed a charm of its own—the touching charm given by sorrow. Her figure was slight, elegant and pliant—a sculptor would not have cared to alter a single line; much shorter than Stella, she looked, according to the consecrated phrase, as if a breath of air would blow her away—so fragile that one might be afraid a rough touch would break her in two. Her dress was in har-

mony with this appearance ; a cloud of muslin floated about her. The first impression she made on Stella was that of being rather old ; girls and boys measure age by quite a different measure from that used by their fathers and mothers. "And not handsome now," thought Miss Stella to herself, "whatever she may have been." These points settled, Stella felt very much more inclined to be cordial to Louis's friend. Her fears and anxieties, as her sudden relief and returning cheerfulness, were involuntary and unconscious emotions. She would have started back with affright had any one whispered to her that she had been jealous of Madame Olympia ; that is, if you please, jealous of the idea of a Madame Olympia. Stella was fluttered, then tranquillized, without reflecting on the why.

Mrs. Gautier, with scrupulous politeness, inquired after Mrs. Joddrell and the two little boys ; and then, with an old-fashioned curtsy, and a wave of her hand to her guests, re-seated herself in her high-backed chair before a writing-table of buhl, evidently of French manufacture. The small woman in black, with her large widow's cap, was, indeed, a right royal lady, one that imposed a respectful demcanour on all who approached her ; a dignity not depending on red and blue liveries, like that of the King and Queen of Cedar Valley. And Mr. Joddrell showed that he felt he was in the presence of his superior. The quiet little old lady had the power to make him walk, and talk, and sit, as he did when he went to Government House. It was this timid little lady who had bidden Mr. Joddrell marry Pepita, Stella's mother, or cease his visits to Silver Hill. His aunt Gautier had read a black page in the book of George Joddrell's life. Yes, Mrs. Gautier timid in asserting herself, was bold in asserting the commandments of God. There, where none prayed, she prayed night and day—there, where man elevated no temple to the Creator, she elevated one in her heart ; long-suffering as the most abject slave ; humble as one who acknowledges her shortcomings ; in spite of the heaviest trials, confident in God's mercy ; hating sin, but merciful to the sinner. Mr. Joddrell never felt at his ease in Mrs. Gautier's presence ; therefore, as soon as she had resumed her seat, he asked Louis to accompany him into the piazza, which sheltered the house on all sides. In the meantime Stella's eyes had wandered round the room she was in. It was an octagon, and in one of the compartments was a fire-place, the sides of blue Dutch tiles, each

tile having on it a scene from the Old Testament. The chimney-piece was of pure white marble, on it a small French clock, Love ruling a lion; behind the time-piece there was an ancient Venetian mirror with a cut-glass frame. With the exception of the clock, the mirror, and the writing-table, the furniture was of the simplest; sofa and chairs covered with white dimity, bound with red galoon, and window-curtains to match; the walls and doors were of mahogany, and the floors also, dark with age, glossy with rubbing. A square piano, half a century old, was placed across a window; it was apparently unfit for service, for on it there was a large vase filled with flowers and some books; some good old prints of Rome—one of St. Peter's, dedicated to the Cardinal (Duca di Yorck), another of the Vatican, dedicated to Cardinal Antonelli, of the Titolo di S. Sabina—were opposite to the Maman's seat. Altogether it looked to Stella a friendly room, one full of relics of persons and times gone by; a room that had heart in it. Olympia, as soon as the gentlemen had withdrawn, proposed to Stella to take off her hat and tie up her habit. The young girl smoothed her ruffled hair before the Venetian mirror, wherein she saw not only herself, but Madame Olympia. "Cousin Louis thinks I am a little like you," said Stella, nodding to the other reflection. "I should like to call you Olympia, may I?"

Never had Stella's voice sounded as it did in this instant; it met Louis Gautier's ears, and he scarcely knew it to be hers. Its strong, clear quality was softened, not into a song or birdlike murmur; no, but into that single, inimitable, unconscious sound that a soul inundated by happiness gives. "Do so, if it pleases you," returned Olympia, in a grave, low tone, and with just sufficient of a foreign accent to be interesting.

"I must call you Olympia, indeed," went on Stella, with a new-found grace, "because I already call my aunt Celia, 'pretty Auntie,' and I must distinguish you from one another."

As Stella turned smilingly to Olympia, she saw Mrs. Gautier looking at her; but instantly, and as if caught in a fault, the old lady withdrew her glance. Stella went and sat down on a low chair by Louis's Maman: never had Stella been so ready to take the initiative before. The low chair on which Stella sat had been that of Mrs. Gautier's only daughter, lost when just bursting into bloom—no one had

ever used that seat since, and for a second the bereaved mother felt as if a sacrilege had been committed, but meeting the innocent, loving eyes raised to her, she laid her hand on the head of her grand-niece in silent blessing and adoption. Mother and son were very much alike, even to their hands, and old as they were, the maman's were still pretty; and, indeed, she was a little vain of them. Little by little the talk warmed, questions and answers followed, and, thanks to the open doors and windows of mountain dwellings, Louis could hear, through the droning of Mr. Joddrell's husky confidence, Stella's young voice harmonizing musically with the deeper tones of his mother and Olympia. He heard her young, wild laugh, echoed by the more tutored one of Olympia, and he had nearly joined in the merriment from pure sympathy while Mr. Joddrell was explaining to him the items of his last will and testament; for that was the subject he wished to consult Louis on, and not about the suspected prayer-meeting. Mr. Gautier had already been a witness to half-a-dozen of his cousin George Joddrell's wills, so he knew what was coming when he heard him say, "Gautier, it doesn't do to be unprepared—God knows what may happen—these are not times to trifle with," etc. Mr. Joddrell, in fact, had concluded a very good bargain with the planter on the other side of Cedar Valley, who, by excess of fear, according to his friends, foresight according to himself, had determined to sell lands and negroes while yet it could be done with some success. "Now," continues Mr. Joddrell, "this takes all the money I had in the English funds, and which by the will I made when I last married, I had given to Stella. So now I mean to entail the properties of Cedar Valley and Belfield on Johnnie, settle Marlborough Castle on my wife, and charge the whole with legacies to Stella and the younger children."

Louis shook his head. "I would rather have had the half of the sum in the English funds, than a couple of Belfields."

"Why, Belfield gave last year a clear thousand pounds," said Mr. Joddrell.

"It may not give a hundred next year," observed Louis. "Besides, if affairs go on as badly as we may expect, Stella will be left totally unprovided for."

"She'll marry, no fear; she's too pretty to be an old maid, and I'll put her in the entail—I'll put her in the entail that gives her the benefit of having expectations."

When the two gentlemen were summoned to their second breakfast or lunch, they found Stella between the Maman and Olympia, her face bright with animation. Louis gave her so cordial a look, that her heart sprung to meet it, and then and there his image stamped itself on that unsullied surface; stamped itself in indelible characters. Love, like Time, you are already aware, dear reader, has no age. No more change for Stella: in good repute and in evil repute, in sunshine or in storm, loved or unloved, Louis was monarch of her heart, and it would never know a divided sway. Good taste presided over all the domestic economy and arrangements at Silver Hill; but there was an entire absence of any display or luxury. Probably, the homeliest meal Stella had partaken of since her arrival, was that she shared at Silver Hill; she thought it the best. However, the happiest as well as the most miserable day must come to an end. As soon as the sun was low in the west, the horses were brought to the door. "Come often, come whenever you like," said the Maman, as Stella stooped for her embrace. Louis led old Janet down the side of the hill; Stella looked back and kissed her hand repeatedly to Olympia, and she said, showing her ingenuous face to Mr. Gautier, "Cousin Louis, I hope we are *quite* friends now." In her voice was an emanation of her affectionate heart. Involuntarily he laid his hand on hers that was resting on the pommel. A moment, just to let her heart settle down from the wave of joy that had heaved it up, and then, as if she feared to be silent, she said, "How I used to imagine that Jamaica must be an ugly place, and now I am sure I never saw lovelier scenery even in Switzerland."

A great, big negro man, with deformed legs and feet, and the air of an idiot, crossed their path. "That sight is not very pastoral, is it?" asked Louis, smiling at her enthusiasm.

"It turns all to ugliness," she replied, with a very little sigh. "I wish I were King of England: I would free all the blacks, and give all the planters plenty of money."

"And you think that would arrange the matter, little cousin?"

"Why should it not?"

"Because no gift which those who receive are unfit to use well, can be a benefit. We shall never agree about the blacks, Stella."

"Oh, yes! we shall," she exclaimed, eagerly.

They were now at the bottom of the hill, and Louis was to

leave them there. "Are you all right?" he asked, letting go her bridle.

"Yes, thank you very much, cousin Louis." He stooped to examine the girths of the saddle, tried her stirrup leather; there really was nothing more to do than say good-by.

"Come over soon, Gautier," cried the Custos. He was subject to taking cold and hot fits with his friends and relations.

"This is our busy time," said Louis to Stella, once more dividing her reins and placing them properly in her fingers, "but I will ride over some day and investigate how you are employing yourself. Take care!" He raised his hat, and the father and daughter rode on. At first Stella talked gaily to Mr. Joddrell; something of past pleasure still gilded her speech: but gradually she fell into silence, as most do when a happy day is coming to its close.



CHAP. XXV.—THE RUNAWAY.

STELLA found a strange black woman in her room, when she went to prepare for dinner. "Who are you?" she asked.

"Lucy Joddrell, young missus." (The blacks often take the surname of their masters.)

"Where is Rebecca?"

"In de tocks, young missus."

"In the stocks?" Why, what has she done?"

"Me no sabey, young missus."

"Make haste, and help me on with my frock—there, never mind the sash," and Stella was running out of the room, when Lucy said—

"Please, young missus, no go; company come, big missus in flurry like."

"What company?"

"Massa from Belfiel, young missus."

"I am sure you know what Rebecca has done; tell me, like a good girl. I promise you, no one shall ever know you told me."

"Hi, me good missus, me hearie one ting, me hearie nodder ting, meself no sabey. Dey say Becka, she ins'lent to big missus; oder say she foun' out a going to night preaching."

"Has she been all day in the stocks?"

" True for you, young missus."

Out ran Stella, and knocked at Mrs. Joddrell's door. " See who it is," said Mrs. Joddrell to her black nurse.

" Hi, I declare, it be Miss Ella self all dressed so dweetly," exclaimed the satellite.

" May I come in, if you please, Mrs. Joddrell ?"

" What is the matter ?" asked the stepmother.

Stella was flushed, and too much in earnest to be diplomatic.

" I have come to inquire about Rebecca."

" What about her ? She is in the stocks for impertinence to me."

" But may she not come out now and ask your pardon ? She has been punished a whole day."

" It won't hurt her. There is one fault I never overlook, and that is insolence. We are come to a pretty pass indeed, if one's own slave can be impertinent to one with impunity."

" If you will not give her the opportunity, how can she beg for forgiveness ?"

" This is a very strange way of addressing your father's wife, Miss Joddrell. You forget yourself."

" Indeed, I do not mean to be rude. I am a very bad hand at explaining."

Mrs. Joddrell was having the last finishing touches put to her dress. She saw her own angry face in the glass. " I don't want to be put out of sorts just as I have strangers to entertain ; my nerves won't stand violence of manner : pray, let me finish dressing in peace." Stella did not go away. " It's of no use waiting here, Miss Joddrell. I have nothing more to say on this subject. To-morrow morning I will mention the case to Mr. Joddrell, and he shall decide between us." There was indeed no use in further waiting. Mrs. Joddrell was, or seemed, solely intent on adjusting a circle of a spider-like web, called by courtesy a cap ; the lappets that fell beside her cheeks softened the thin contour of the jaws ; the lady was satisfied with the effect, and the angry spark went out of her eyes. But Stella's feelings did not smooth down while she pinned at her sash. She never even glanced at her own reflection in the mirror. Just as much as she had felt an ethereal lightness of heart all the morning at Silver Hill, so from the first moment of her arriving at her father's house, she had experienced a sensation of unfitness with everybody and everything there. A week had not elapsed, and this feeling had developed into actual discord. " I wish

I had been more gentle," she mused. "I have done more harm than good." With the same impulsiveness with which she had run to defend Rebecca, she was now hastening to ask of her stepmother forgiveness for her impetuosity. When she entered the drawing-room, Mrs. Joddrell was talking to Mr. Belfield's wife, a stout, fresh-coloured woman. The ladies interrupted their conversation to look at Stella. "The Custos's daughter, I suppose," remarked Mrs. Belfield, eyeing Stella with coarse, cool curiosity. "Well, my dear, you're glad you left school, no doubt. What is her age?" turning again to Mrs. Joddrell. "Nineteen," was the reply. Mrs. Belfield continued, "Oh, then you'll be thinking of something more lively than coffee bushes." Here there was a significant nod to Mrs. Joddrell.

Mrs. Joddrell never allowed her eye to meet Stella's, but resumed the topic of her former conversation with her guest: Stella was decidedly sent to Coventry. Presently, Mrs. Joddrell dropped her handkerchief; Stella started forward and picked it up. "Thank you," said the stepmother, but never looking at the young lady. Mrs. Belfield asked to see Johnnie and the baby; once more Stella rose to go and fetch them. "Don't trouble yourself, Miss Joddrell; nurse will bring them," and the lady rang her silver hand-bell. The words were nothing, but they were spoken with that dreadful, icy politeness which freezes the marrow in one's bones. Johnnie, as usual, was for sitting on his sister's knee; even the innocent child must be sacrificed to selfish ill-temper. He was kept close to the stranger's side by a magnetizing glance of his mother's, his little mouth quivering in a way that brought the tears to Stella's eyes. At last the gentlemen appeared, and dinner was announced. Mr. Belfield, a gentlemanly person, looked inquiringly towards Stella, but nobody thought it worth while to introduce them to one another. Almost the whole conversation at table consisted of Mrs. Belfield's calls to her husband of "Bel, eat some of that dish: it's excellent." "Bel, taste this: it's capital." "What a cook you have got, Mr. Joddrell!"

"I hired him from Thomasfield when old Gordon went to England," said Mr. Joddrell: "he ought to be good, for he costs two doubloons a month."

"What! the negro they call French Charles?" asked Mrs. Belfield. "Saucy fellow, ain't he: I remember the Gordons complaining that he was one of the troublesome crew."

"I should like to see him give himself airs to me," replied the Custos, pompously.

After dinner the same avoidance of Stella by Mrs. Joddrell: the gentlemen remaining in the dining-room all the evening, Mrs. Joddrell had the game in her own hands. The next morning, at breakfast, Stella discovered that her father and Mr. Belfield had gone down to Kingston, to settle the business of the transfer of the estate of Belfield. It was evident to Stella that Mrs. Joddrell meant to keep her at arm's length, so she took refuge in her own room. She was so uneasy, she could settle to no employment. If cousin Louis would only come, he would set everything to rights. Her thoughts went on swift pinions to him, and for a little they hovered about him; then again she would, as it were, wake up, her nerves all tingling with the idea of the black girl sitting now a second day in confinement. To-morrow was Sunday: it would not be possible for Mrs. Joddrell to persist in her anger, after reading and saying her prayers—this thought was Stella's comfort. Mr. Belfield and the Custos returned late, after their wives had retired for the night.

Breakfast over the next morning, Sunday, the party assembled in the drawing-room, and Mr. Joddrell told Stella she should be parson, and read the lessons and psalms of the day. The responses in the last were made with great unction by every one present; Mrs. Belfield, as a work of supererogation, repeating every word of the lessons in a voice nearly as audible as that of the reader. Still no opportunity to say a word in private to Mrs. Joddrell; and Stella hesitated to speak of Rebecca to her father, lest she might be accused of complaining of her stepmother. However, she resolved not to sleep another night without making an attempt to mollify Mrs. Joddrell.

It was nightfall when Mr. Joddrell was called out to speak to his overseer. In five minutes he returned, very red in the face, and almost inarticulate with passion. "What the —— made you keep Rebecca in the stocks for three days?" he said to his wife.

"I always meant to tell you, and forgot it," replied Mrs. Joddrell.

"Forgot!" stormed Mr. Joddrell; "it's a d——d lie. I hope, ma'am, you'll like it when you are brought up before a court to answer for cruelty. It was just like a woman never to think of anything but her own spite. The girl's off, ma'am —*taken her foot in her hand.*"

"Who ordered her to be let out?" asked Mrs. Joddrell, looking hard at Stella.

Mr. Joddrell turned on his daughter. "Have you had a hand in this, miss?"

"No, papa."

"By the lord Harry, whoever has done it, shall account for it, were they ten times my daughter. Send Mr. Boggis here to me, some one," roared the Custos.

"Did Miss Joddrell desire you to let that minx out of the stocks, sir?"

"No, sir. It has been done by some of her friends, sir; the padlocks have been wrenched off."

"Find out, sir, who did it, or find another situation for yourself," shouted the Custos. Mrs. Joddrell sheltered herself by beginning to weep. Mrs. Belfield, patting her on the shoulder, sighed out, "Poor dear! never you mind: men will have their tanteraras, you know; but catch me shedding a tear for anything they can say." One of the advertisements so abhorred by aunt Pliilly appeared in the *Kingston Courant*, offering an unusually large reward for the apprehension or for any intelligence of Rebecca. In vain; neither was any discovery made as to who had been her liberator. Every morning, in her early ride, Stella examined the coffee bushes, with a sort of expectation that she should see Rebecca's tall figure emerge from among them. Stella was full of anxieties about her runaway maiden; she knew nothing practically of negro habits, or of their resources in time of need. Theoretically, her least dread was starvation: she had horrid visions of the poor girl being tracked by Cuban dogs.



CHAP. XXVI.—FRENCH CHARLES.

MORE than a fortnight had elapsed since Rebecca's flight, and during this time Mr. Belfield's fertile little estate had passed into Mr. Joddrell's hands. The former owner and his wife had taken leave of Cedar Valley, and were *en route* for England. Mrs. Joddrell had received Stella into her good graces again, in a moment of excitement over a handsome dress presented to her by her husband as a Christmas gift. It was close on the three days' holiday enjoyed by the slaves

at Christmas, and a certain air of gaiety prevailed about the plantation. The overseer was busy doling out rations to the negroes, and the house servants were making merry over gay printed calicoes and kerchiefs of orange, red, and blue. But Stella could not feel gay; indeed, her heart beat unquietly. She wondered Louis had not come once to see them; wondered what withheld her from asking leave to go again to Silver Hill; wondered if her life was to slip away thus, without her being allowed a share in the joy or sorrow of others. For she perceived that her only chance of not giving offence, or of being the cause of evil, was to remain passive. She was depressed and discouraged: any toil or danger was preferable to this colourless life. There was a spot not far from the Great House, yet quite hidden from it, whither Stella often went. It was the family burial ground: in those tropical climates, where the tree fell there it lay. Her grandfather Joddrell was interred there, and so was Stella's young mother. Tall palm-trees stood as sentinels around this field of the dead, the intertwined branches making a shade even at noonday over the melancholy mounds. There was always a certainty of solitude there, for within those precincts no negro ever ventured of his own free will, and not for freedom would any one of them have gone near the place after dark. The belief was current that "old massa" walked at night. Stella had often strewed flowers over the graves, as she had seen done at Evian; and one day she found that some kind hand had planted a little hedge of young rose suckers round the spot where her mother rested. She made no inquiries, said nothing at home, but each day, either before or after dinner, she would make her escape unseen to water these sacred plants. It was on the fifteenth day—that is, again on a Sunday—that at twilight she was at the lonely, silent nook performing this task, when she heard the unusual sound of a footstep, and immediately after Mr. Boggis, the overseer, was by her side. He stood so respectfully, hat in hand, that she did not feel startled, though they had never exchanged words, and to her knowledge, they had come across one another but twice.

"I think," she said, without waiting for him to speak, "that I must be indebted to you for a very kind attention," pointing to the young rose-bushes; "I am much obliged to you," and she offered her hand to him. Mr. Boggis held it for a second as if afraid of crushing it, and with some confusion said, he was glad he could do anything to please Miss Jod-

drell. There was a little pause, and Stella was just going to wish him good evening, when the overseer begged her to hear what he had to say. "I am very much troubled in my mind, miss; these ain't the times to trifle with, there is such a seeking to find planters in fault; and you see, for to go to flog a man like French Charles, is driving matters hard."

"I do not understand," said Stella.

"Why, miss, you see, Charles was Rebecca's beau, and he it was who broke the padlocks of the stocks. One of the field hands let the cat out of the bag, and Mrs. Joddrell's nurse carried the news to her mistress. Charles is now in the stocks, and the Custos has determined that he shall be flogged to-morrow, before all the people, when they come to the Barbecues with grass. I am sorry for the poor devil, for he has never had a lash on him, and is as proud as any white. If he had given sauce when I locked him up, I should not have minded so much, but he said he couldn't help it—the girl's legs were swollen as big as mill posts, and he'd do it again; he would sit a month himself and never complain. He don't know nothing of the flogging in store for him; if he did, he'd be capable of turning his tongue back in his throat, and dying right off at once. I have known some of 'em die in spite of your teeth because of being flogged, like that Denniston of Silver Hill; and a fine kettle of fish them missionaries will cook out of such a story."

"Oh, Mr. Boggis! cannot you prevent this punishment?" Mr. Boggis combed his bristly short hair with his ten fingers. "Can't you ask your papa, miss, to grant you his grace?"

"He would not listen to me, Mr. Boggis; I am sure he would not."

"I don't believe he can refuse you, I don't indeed," said Mr. Boggis, with earnest belief in his own words. "A daughter's prayers must reach her father's heart."

"I will try, indeed I will, but if he says no——?"

Mr. Boggis once more had recourse to his hair. "I don't—no I don't see no other way but your asking, miss; and now, Miss Joddrell, I must go away; if any of them spies sees me a talking to you, I'm done for, so please to stay here till you have counted a hundred. I shall be out of sight then." Mr. Boggis had disappeared ere she could have said one; while she counted up to fifty she could still hear a rush of rolling stones as if some one was running down a steep place, and then all was quiet as before. She continued counting

however, until she had finished the prescribed number, and then she took her slow way back to the Great House. At the hall door she perceived her father, and heard the sound of a drum, and singing. Some boys and girls were dancing "Johnkanoo" for massa's amusement. Mr. Joddrell was swearing like a trooper, and at the same time throwing the small coin called "bits" to be scrambled for. A fine sight it was for a daughter on a Sunday evening, coming from her mother's grave. Cunning and fear, in presence of drunkenness and absolute power. "Come here, Stella, and see a negro dance. Like monkey's arn't they? Ha! ha! ha!" A shout of laughter echoed the master's laugh. There was no hope of obtaining mercy from Mr. Joddrell this evening. Stella, on her knees, from her full heart, exclaimed, "O God! pardon him, for he knows not what he does." Mr. Boggis was lingering in the Cedar Avenue as Stella went by, on her ride the next morning. She shook her head without speaking, and passed on. She strove to fashion out an appeal that might touch her father, but winding itself most subtly with her fears and hopes was the idea of cousin Louis. At the end of the avenue, denoting one of the boundaries of the estate was a small gate, usually shut; this morning it stood open. Stella rode through, and looked longingly at the path on the other side of the river. She let Janet go down the hill, glanced right and left, stopped at the water's edge; it was so shallow it would scarcely cover her mare's feet; made a slight effort to tighten her rein, and at last yielded to the impulse which bade her go to Silver Hill. Palpitating, half with fright, half with joy, she gave Janet her head, forded the river, and began the ascent to the gray rocks. She had just reached the narrowest, darkest part of the road, when she heard a laugh and a shout, and the patter of some one running behind her. She made a desperate effort, and looked round, and saw a negro boy holding on tightly by Janet's tail. He grinned and nodded to her in a very friendly manner. "Let go, if you please," cried Stella. "Him go best so, young missus, chirr up," and surely enough, the additional load made the old white mare quicken her pace marvellously. 'Not another living soul did Stella meet. What would they say at Silver Hill to her coming alone? When it was too late, Stella was troubled by a sudden fear of making Louis think ill of her. Though the white house and its green jalousies were before her, had she been alone, she probably would even

then have turned her horse's head, and, like the King of France, and his ten thousand men, rode down the hill again. But the little negro at Janet's tail, was a sort of public, and Stella could not show cowardice before it. A negro woman looked out from the house door, then quickly ran back. Stella did not know whether to alight or not. In a minute, however, Olympia came to her; astonishment on her face, but a kindly welcome on her lips. "I hope you have come to spend a long day with us," said she.

"Oh! no, I wanted to ask cousin Louis to help me."

"Gautier is in the field," answered Olympia. "I will, however, send to call him home. In the meantime, come in and have a cup of coffee."

Very much subdued, Stella accompanied Olympia into the sitting-room. "The Maman is still in bed, but I dare say she will see you." When Stella found herself with her hand in Mrs. Gautier's, her courage revived, and she told her story clearly. Louis came in, and his mother repeated the substance to him.

"I do not see how I can interfere," said Mr. Gautier: "if Charles had come to me himself, I might have made an application in his behalf to the Custos—that is, tried to obtain some mitigation of his punishment—but——" Here Stella broke in with—"I came to you, because I know papa will not listen to me; I am sure he will not. I think I shall die, cousin Louis, if I hear that dreadful whip," and the big tears ran down her cheeks, produced by a mingled emotion of disappointment and compassion. Mr. Gautier's features twitched as he witnessed the rain of grief from his young cousin's eyes; he guessed what a pain it must be, that forced forth such heavy drops. He had seen fire sparkle in those large eyes, he had seen an intrepid frank look in them, that had made him describe her as having the air of a little preux chevalier; but with this girlishly pitiful face he had never imagined her. "What was Charles's fault?" he asked.

"It was not a fault at all, cousin Louis. He let Rebecca out of the stocks. I wonder how any one can have the heart to punish him for that—how could he see the girl he loved in pain and not try to help her? Did Louis XVIII. punish Madame Lavalette for helping her husband to escape?" Stella had on her chivalrous aspect again.

A soft smile stole over Louis's face. "Rather a difference between the two cases, Stella," he said.

"No, cousin Louis; people feel the same, though one may be great, and the other only a poor slave," and again the bright look faded.

"A wilful woman must have her way," said Mr. Gautier, "so I suppose I must go and take my share of this broil."

"If you are by me, cousin Louis, I shall not be a bit afraid to ask papa." Mr. Gautier made no direct answer; did not even glance towards Stella: but saying he would order his horse, left the room.

"Go and get a cup of coffee, my child," said Mrs. Gautier; "and, Stella"—here the Maman drew the girl's head down close to her, whispering—"remember that one of our trials in this world, is that we cannot accomplish the good that we would; now go and get your coffee." All this time Olympia had been standing silent at the window; she now as silently led the way to the sitting-room. When Stella turned to her to let her still full heart overflow, to tell of her hopes and fears, she was struck by the pale tight-drawn lips, the rigidity of Olympia's countenance. Stella stopped short in the speech she had begun. "You should have a care," said Olympia, "how you bring men into collision. It is all very well for women to thrust themselves into disputes and dilemmas, but for men there is danger." Stella's eyes opened wide with astonishment at this address; and at the look and tone with which it was delivered. "Danger!" she repeated; "how can there be danger in cousin Louis speaking to papa?"

"Cannot you understand," continued Olympia, her face becoming each instant more stony, "that one word leads to another, and the tongue is a little instrument that may kindle a great fire."

"I am very sorry," began Stella, her heart rising, "that I came here. Louis shall not incur any risk through me; it seemed right to try and help the oppressed."

"Yet you were afraid to endeavour to do so yourself."

"Afraid only of not succeeding," said Stella. "I have not yet won a place in my father's heart; my mother's seat is filled by a stranger to my blood. Why, Olympia, do you bid me hinder God's blessing from falling on the man who would defend the innocent?"

Olympia slightly shrugged her shoulders, and replied—"I am not one of those, my dear, who imagine that the Creator of the Universe is busied for ever with every acci-

dent of our lives. He has given us reason to guide us, and if we defy reason, why we must take the consequences. The laws that govern the world continue their course; the sun shines on the just and the unjust, and a pistol-shot from the unrighteous as often as not kills the righteous." A loud whistle from Louis made Olympia stop speaking. "You must go now," she said.

"Olympia," said Stella, hurriedly, "I don't think as you do. I *do* believe that God watches over us night and day."

Another impatient whistle. "Do not repeat to Gautier what I have been saying, or you will urge him on to some imprudence," were Madame Olympia's last words. Mr. Gautier was questioning the negro boy who had hung on at Janet's tail. Stella came in time to hear her cousin say, "So you are Mr. Boggis's boy. Busha* desired you to come and take care of Miss Stella." The boy answered affirmatively by scraping his foot and showing the whole white of his eyes. "I shall be back in a couple of hours," said Gautier to Olympia. "Send Maurice to the field, and just compare the clothing sent up last night with Popplewell's account." He nodded and rode forward, Stella following, with the boy behind her, now as mute as a mole. When they reached the river course the cousins could ride abreast. Louis then asked, "How did Mr. Boggis know you were coming to Silver Hill?"

"I cannot tell, unless he saw me take the road; his boy did not come up with me till I was at the gray rock. It was from that Mr. Boggis, cousin Louis, I heard about poor Charles."

"How did he find an opportunity of speaking to you?"

"When I was at the burial-ground."

"Do you go there regularly?"

"Almost every day, to water the flowers round mamma's grave. It was very good of Mr. Boggis to plant them."

"Then the overseer, it would appear, watches what you do, knows your habits?"

"Stella looked at her companion and replied, "I am not aware if he does so or not."

"It is not right, Stella, that any man should seek private interviews with you, and particularly one in Boggis's situation. I understand that you would not like to give up what

* Busha, overseer.

you consider a pious duty; but always take some one with you, your maid or little Johnnie."

"I will, cousin Louis; but Mr. Boggis never even spoke to me before."

"Yes, yes! take my advice; women cannot be too careful."

They were now on the other side of the river, at the bottom of the path leading up to Cedar Valley. With a wistful look at Louis, Stella said, "You must not come any further, cousin. I have done one foolish thing, and I shall not mend it by adding a second. It might make papa more angry still that I brought you over."

"That was my first idea also," said Louis. "However, now I am here, let us try our luck. We can but get a good scolding."

"No, no!" replied Stella; "please, cousin Louis, to go back. I am not frightened now—please, cousin, to forgive me, and go away."

Truth to say, Mr. Gautier had been considering himself as a Quixote, to whom Mr. Joddrell might with propriety say, "I am the best judge of my own concerns; when I require your advice I shall ask for it;" then what a ridiculous figure he should cut. Of all things that men in general and particular resent, is the being forced by any but themselves into a false position. Besides, though, had the negro Charles been his slave, Mr. Gautier would have contented himself with inflicting some slight punishment for the sake of discipline, he could not deny that Charles had made himself legally liable to a flogging. Therefore it was that, when Stella said, "Please, cousin Louis, to go back," he answered, "I am quite willing to go with you and give you all the aid in my power, but I believe my presence would be more apt to injure your cause than benefit it. Your father might resolve to show that he thought my interference a piece of impertinence."

"I see now how stupid I have been to give you so much trouble," said Stella. "I am sure you would help me if you could, cousin Louis; pray go."

"No need for such haste," he replied, hardly satisfied with himself. "I shall ride over after dinner, and hear how you have succeeded."

"Yes, do." The black boy opened the little gate, and Stella rode through. Louis remained looking after her, even when she had long vanished from his sight. He fancied he had heard a sob.

CHAP. XXVII.—WOE TO THE CONQUERED.

YES, Stella was sobbing like a child as she rode along the avenue; the tension of her mind had slackened, and she could no longer control the outburst of the mixed emotions of the morning. Mr. Joddrell was parading before the hall door as she rode up, the skirts of his flannel dressing-gown spreading out behind him like the tail of a white peacock. "What's the matter?" he cried, as helped his daughter from the saddle. "Have you hurt yourself?"

"No, papa." She clasped his fat, freckled hand in hers. "Only pray, pray, do forgive French Charles; he did not do it from wickedness, papa, but from love. Oh! papa, it is so hard to see any one we love suffer."

"Hoity, toity! here's a tragic actress; why, you silly child, if I let the rascal off, I should never be sure of keeping a foot in the stocks; it would be, Oh! me good massa, me lub Phœbe, Minerva, Jupiter, Juno, Apollo. A fine way of managing blacks, indeed! What do they know about love and such stuff, do you think?"

"Only this once, papa, just try this once; to-morrow is Christmas-day, every one ought to be happy on Christmas-day. It will bring a blessing on you, papa."

"Well, I will."

"Oh! thank you, papa; my dear, good papa," and she was running away.

"Stop, where are you going? wait till I finish—on condition that he tells where Rebecca is."

"He can't! he won't!" exclaimed Stella: "oh, don't ask him! it would be horrible."

"Very well, then, go about your business and let him be flogged and be d——d to him."

Stella had not let go her father's hand.

"Papa, forgive them both, it will be so grand. Every one will adore you. Oh! papa, papa, say one word and make the poor things happy."

"Annihilate space and time, and make two lovers happy," sang Mr. Joddrell, jocosely. "There, let go my hand, Stella; if you like, you may go and ask Charles yourself. I daresay he'll take a less high-flown view of the matter than you do. Come with me and ask him."

Mr. Joddrell led her across the yard, into a species of barn

in a line with the kitchens. "Desire Mr. Boggis to bring the key of the black hole," called out the Custos. Mr. Boggis, red as a turkey-cock, appeared and opened the door. "There, go in and speak to your protégé," continued Mr. Joddrell. The sullen look passed from French Charles's face as Stella went to his side. He had been a town negro, and by nature and education very superior to the rest of the blacks of Cedar Valley. His features were not those of the Mandingo tribe; his nose was low but aquiline, his forehead broad and massive, the head altogether well shaped. He was a tall, muscular man, and there really was a dignified air about him even now, in spite of his awkward position. "You be berry good, young lady, to come and pity me; Rebecca say you real kind."

"I have begged papa to forgive you, Charles, but I am half afraid to tell you what he says you must do, if you wouldn't be flogged."

Charles's eyes brightened. "God Almighty bless you, me young missus; I'm hon'rabl man, no scar on my back, my parents hon'rabl people. I will do whatever Massa Joddrell please, so he no flog me."

Stella said, almost in a whisper, "You must tell where Rebecca is."

"Den massa must do him will on me, young missus; it beneath a man to peach upon a poor girl. Young lady, bad'll come of it: de whip take de good out of a negro. I be hon'rabl man to-day—de whip make me coward, tief, every bad ting to-morrow. Tell massa Joddrell, young missus, dese bery words for me, eberv dog hab him day."

"He won't, won't he?" said Mr. Joddrell; "very well, it's his own look out, an obstinate jackass! Here, Boggis, lay him down."

"Don't, don't, papa," screamed Stella, flinging her arms round her father, and kissing his lips; "don't, don't; have mercy on him for God's sake. Papa! papa!"

"Take him out I say, Boggis. Once give way, and there'll be no end to confusion. What I've said, I'll stick to." Not a negro was to be seen, to help the overseer. The three whites were standing alone in the yard. Every black had disappeared, as if by magic. "Blow the shell, sir," said the Custos, in his huskiest tones, "and bring the hands in from the field. I'll see who is master here. Let me alone, Stella." And half-carrying, half-dragging, he forced her across into the house. Mrs. Joddrell's nerves gave way as she saw the

pale, terrified girl. "Yield this time, George," she said, beginning to cry. "The devil take the women! one would think a negro had never been flogged before," and the Custos stalked away.

Presently the loud crack of a whip resounded. Had it been the thunder-crack of doomsday, Stella could not have met it with a more startling shriek. She ran backwards and forwards in the hall, like one possessed, every lash tearing a scream from her. At last the three-dozen-and-three had been meted out, and Mr. Joddrell returned to the dining-room. There was no noise there; his wife was seated on the floor with Stella lying across her lap, and half a dozen negro women moaning round her. As Mr. Joddrell approached, his wife called out, "See what you have done." The tone of the mistress gave the pitch to her attendants; the tall black housekeeper, Manie, his minister for household affairs, the chief aid in the sick house, immediately opened on him a strophe of lamentation and reproach, followed by anti-strophes from the other women. It was a Greek chorus; servile when advice might have served; prophesying, threatening, lamenting when the deed was done. Mr. Joddrell tried to stem the bitter tide of words by his biggest oaths. Mistress and maids defied him, until like a chastised hound he slunk from their company. There was no need for Mr. Gautier to ask how Stella's prayer had prospered. The sight of her lying on the sofa in the small drawing-room, cheeks and eyes in a blaze with fever, was very explicit. And what further explanation he might have required was given by the Custos' hoarse stutters of, "You see it was this way, and you understand what my reasons were, but women are so violent and head-strong. I never dreamed the girl was such a soft fool, or I'd not have done it; for after all, Gautier, I'm not a cruel man. I'm not half as strict as you are. I give the black toads twice as much money, twice as many holidays as others do. I am not a bad master, be d—d if I am, not half as bad as those who are more mealy-mouthed." Mr. Joddrell could not bring himself to look at Stella; he was both sorry and angry. As he wandered about the premises, he condescended to make advances to any of the Nancys or Susans he met; he stopped them to inquire for pickaninnies, and for daddys and mammys. Popular reprobation, though it proceed only from inferiors, or even slaves, makes the haughtiest wince. Nor was Louis's conscience at rest; he upbraided himself bitterly

during the hour he sat by Stella's side, often falling into deep reveries. Not a sound, not a moving object broke the stillness of the view from the window before which the sofa stood. The long, broad fronds of the plantain trees hung motionless, the air was heavy with the perfume of orange flowers. There was silence within, but not a happy silence; rather one which proceeded from hearts into which had entered many doubts and fears. In such silences a man's mind is sometimes wont to tell him more than "seven watchmen that sit above in a high tower." A resolution was forming in Louis's mind, with which he was yet contending. He was not a man to yield to momentary impulses, however tempted. Conviction must come home to him ere he made the slightest concession. "Thank you, cousin Louis," said Stella, when rousing from this silence, he told her he must go. He did not ask her why she thanked him. He very well knew his presence comforted her. On his side he questioned, "Would you like that I should come again to-morrow?"

"Oh! so much," and the poor swollen eyes beamed with joy. "Only to-morrow is Christmas-day, and perhaps you should not leave home."

"I shall come. Good-night." Louis, in relating to Olympia what had occurred at Cedar Valley, observed, "I reproach myself for not having accompanied Stella this morning. Even if Joddrell had not yielded the point, I could have prevented the shock and alarm being so great to her. Her stupid father had the man punished within her hearing. I ought to have remembered that I am the only one hereabouts who is not a stranger to her." Louis was much disturbed; he added, "I feel positively as if a share of to-day's cruelty belongs to me."

"Do not blame yourself, my dear friend," said Olympia. "The fault, if there be any, is mine. I bade Stella prevent your interference. I was afraid of a quarrel between you and Mr. Joddrell. You really are quite innocent of even any sin of omission, and what you describe makes me only more satisfied with what I advised. I am very sorry for Stella; it is the beginning of a series of sad experiences for her, poor thing. Still that is no reason for your incurring unnecessary risk." As Gautier did not immediately reply, Olympia asked, "You are not vexed with me?"

"I am uneasy," he answered. "Do you know, Olympia, I never felt so much in charity with the Emancipationists as this

evening. I have been asking myself, as I rode home, whether really and truly the blacks are incapable of civilization. The conduct of this French Charles with regard to Rebecca, shows me, that whatever the colour of the skin, it is true that 'humanity has but one heart.'

"We must talk over your new ideas to-morrow," said Olympia, with a smile, quite a bright smile, betraying nothing but complacency. "It is already midnight, and I am very tired with dividing the calicoes and *madrasses*."

"I am a monster," said Louis, "with my theories and visions, and leaving you all the practical part of life. Sleep well, my good Olympia."

Poor friendship! thy empire is crumbling away. It is a trying moment for a mother or sister (and something of both had Olympia been to Louis) when she sees the thoughts of one so dearly loved apparently engrossed by another, who has done nothing visible to other eyes to deserve this devotion. Olympia is very bitter. "Are all men fools?" she asks herself. "Is a little youth, a great deal of ignorance, then, so charming? Upon my honour, I had forgotten it. So he too likes a blank sheet of paper. I knew that his sex as a rule do so, under the flattering supposition that they will be the first and last to inscribe their names on it; but I thought he had had experience enough to be aware what love is. A fever that may last six months, then satiety and all its crew."

"Olympia!" called Louis's voice. She opened her door.

"My dear friend, you are pale. I came to make sure I had not hurt your feelings. I need not tell you that I am stupidly sensitive about doing my part as a man. With you I speak without measuring my words. I do not think it necessary to say at every instant 'thank you' for the interest you take in me, and to-night, I confess, a certain remorse of conscience made me egotistical."

"Vexed, hurt!" returned Olympia. "You are joking; we are not children to be quarrelling and making it up. Come, go to bed; good-night! I am more than half asleep already."

"Good-night, Olympia!"

CHAP. XXVIII.—A SHIP WITHOUT A HELM.

MR. JODDRELL was one of those men who choose always to believe that which they wish. One of the actors in the crisis at hand for Jamaica, he had made up his mind that no such thing as a storm overshadowed the island, and afterwards found reasons to support his conviction. All through life, in small things as in great, he had always decided, not according to logical probability, but according to what he desired should be the case. Judgment he had none, nor any theory of conduct. He was like a ship without a helmsman; so long as the wind and waves were favourable, the vessel would float on the ocean in safety; a typhoon comes, and it is forthwith submerged. It is frightful to think how many men there are like Mr. Joddrell, with wives and daughters whom they carry along with them to loss and ruin. He received Louis Gautier on Christmas morning with loud cordiality. "Calm weather," he said, with the glee of a schoolboy well out of a scrape; "it is all sunshine to-day; stay and eat your roast beef with us, and I'll be bound Mr. Charles will do his best to make massa forget yesterday."

"If I were you, Joddrell, I would send that man back to Gordon's place."

"Why?" asked the Custos, his face swelling and reddening.

"Because, do you see, that man has begun to think, and depend on it, he is likely to be troublesome."

Mr. Joddrell had, as usual, a supple jack in his hand; he made the pliant switch describe a curve in the air, producing a loud, significant smack. Gautier shook his head, and said, gravely—"The power of the whip is past, Joddrell."

"With cowards, perhaps," returned the Custos, blowing out his cheeks. "I am not one to look one way and row the other. No man breathing shall ever accuse me of ratting from my party at the moment it is attacked. It has been," continued Mr. Joddrell, quoting from his own last speech in the House of Assembly—"it has been from forsaking the paths of our forefathers, from taking up new-fangled notions they would have laughed to scorn, from our blowing hot and cold, that a breach has been effected in our institutions; it is by the inconsistency of some among us, wolves among sheep, that this island, the most loyal part of his majesty's dominions,

has been held up to obloquy, and attacked in its dearest privileges."

Louis had an inextinguishable contempt for his cousin George Joddrell; still, as coward is not a pretty word to use in argument, it was as well that the Custos remembered his last oration so well. It gave Mr. Gautier time to recollect that, though "you may bray a fool in a mortar, you won't bring him out a wise man."

"Whatever the cause, call it cowardice if you will," said Louis, calmly, "we can no more prevent a change in the social position of the slave, than we can throw a stone upwards and prevent its falling to the ground. Every act of rigour is at this present time brought forward and submitted to a close investigation. I think you have been imprudent, to say the least of it, in punishing so severely another man's slave." •

Mr. Joddrell looked up at Louis, laid his fore-finger along the side of his nose with an expression of mischievous mirth, but his answer was prevented by a sound like the clack of a mill. In another instant the top of Miss Portia's sedan-chair appeared above the garden hedge. Round to the porch it was carried at a swinging trot by her four laughing, chattering bearers. Mr. Joddrell welcomed the old lady warmly; he was always glad of company. "A merry Christmas to you, aunt Portia," he exclaimed.

"Are you all safe here?" inquired Miss Lowe, solemnly, and standing still on the threshold of the door.

"All as sound as a rock," answered Mr. Joddrell. "What should ail us, aunt Portia?"

"Ah! George Joddrell, you are among those who cry out, 'Prophesy unto us smooth things, prophesy unto us deceits.' You are among the unbelieving, who when there comes one to warn you, require a sign. But it is said, 'Tempt not the Lord.'"

"What's your text, aunt Portia?" said Mr. Joddrell, laughing. Here Mrs. Joddrell and Stella came into the long hall.

"'Tempt not the Lord,' George Joddrell," repeated Miss Portia; "but send away French Charles, your famous cook."

"The devil take me if I do," said Mr. Joddrell; "do you know, it was only three days ago I paid four hundred and twenty dollars for him?"

"I thought Gordon had promised Charles he should have time to buy himself free," said Louis, looking astonished.

"Promises like that are no better than pie-crust," replied Mr. Joddrell, "and necessity has no law. French Charley was sold for debt, and I bought him." Louis moved away in silent disgust, and sat himself down by Stella. "Can you keep a secret?" he asked.

"Yes."

"That a little girl has been in the right, and her elderly cousin in the wrong?"

"I shall never tell anybody that," replied Stella.

"It was the anticipation of failure, and the idea of being thought ridiculous as a petitioner for the pardon of a slave, which prevented my accompanying you yesterday. I should not have succeeded any better than you did, I can see, but I ought not from mere self-love to have declined the attempt."

"It was not from self-love, cousin Louis."

"What was it then?"

"You were not convinced that I was right."

"Thank you for being so charitable," he said. "Well, I am now convinced you were right." She looked at him with the frank, confiding look of a child, rather than with the bashful joy of a young maiden perceiving her power, and her extreme youthfulness struck him almost with surprise. "You do not look a day older than you did three years ago," he remarked.

"Don't I? It seems to me, cousin Louis, as if I had lived an immense time; these last years have been so long."

"Strange," said Louis, "how we are always straining towards the future, in a hurry to get rid of the present, as if of a bar to our happiness; it would be more natural if we grudged every day that passes. To make such longing logical, Stella, there must be another and a better world. Don't look alarmed, little cousin, I am not an infidel; I am working round to tell you how I came to be convinced you were right. I argued that if this Charley, this negro, this slave, the son of slaves, proves his equality with the white man by willingly bearing suffering for another, then he must have higher aspirations than those of mere bodily enjoyment; then he can no longer be trusted, be used as a slave—a soulless thing; he is become a man; he must be looked after, his condition *must* be ameliorated, independently of the pressure of public opinion in England, for without some radical reform in the system here, we shall have worse than rebellion."

"I wished you had stopped before you said these last words, cousin Louis."

"I am a man, Stella—a stubborn, tenacious, self-seeking animal; you must take me as I am—I am no hero of romance. I shall promote by every means in my power ameliorations in the management and position of my slaves, *because* it is the wisest course to do so."

Stella answered—"Cousin Louis, I should like better to hear you say, that you wish for a change because you have the feeling of what is due from man to man. Cousin Louis, I shall be ashamed ever to see that poor Charles again; I wish he could be sent away."

"And you are right, child," said aunt Portia, breaking into the conversation. "In the garden grows more than the gardener sows. Where are you going, Louis Gautier?"

"I must eat my Christmas dinner under my own roof tree."

"You'll just stay and listen to me; it's on me to tell it; believe me or not, I shall have done my duty." Louis remained standing with his hand on the back of Stella's chair; Mrs. Joddrell, attracted by aunt Portia's summons, came and stood by Mr. Gautier. Aunt Portia began, "I was not in my bed, good people, and I never sleep anywhere else. Twilight had just dropped into darkness, and I was watching the mysterious coming and going of the fireflies' light, when all at once I saw Miss Stella standing before me, and she said she had come to fetch me to pass the day here. I set out with her; and as we approached this house I saw three little churches joining it, and when I turned to ask Miss Stella who had built them, she was gone; and I saw French Charles, Johnnie, and the Custos with the baby standing in front of me. I distinctly heard Charles ask Johnnie to go into the church nearest to him, and the little boy went; and then he asked the baby and Mr. Joddrell, and baby walked by himself into one, and the Custos into another; and immediately the walls of the churches became transparent, and I saw the children one on each communion-table, and the father on the third; and there was a noise of heavy blows, and I heard shrieks, and the tables crumbled away, and the children went down into a pit, and then the voices cried, 'This is hell;' and a great trumpet sounded, and the tones spoke like unto a man's voice, crying—'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will repay.'" Aunt Portia had begun her narration in a quiet rational way, but as she proceeded her own words

stirred her imagination, she stretched forth her lean arm, clenched her hand, her eyes gleamed, and she rang out the text from Scripture in tones that froze the blood in her hearers' veins. The next moment, quite exhausted, she crept away and hid herself in her sedan-chair. So certain was Miss Lowe of her own supernatural gifts, that she had succeeded in impressing some kind of superstitious belief in them on most who knew her. Mrs. Joddrell burst into tears, exclaiming, "George, I am frightened. Send away that Charles."

"Did you ever know a man so be-womaned as I am, Gautier?" said the bewildered Custos. "One would think a negro had never been punished before, and that I had committed a crime sufficient to bring down fire from heaven on all our heads. Whenever there's mischief, be sure a woman's in it; they're so mighty fierce, too, when they think they are safe. You heard Mrs. Joddrell say I always wanted to shirk everything; she showed *her* spirit, and here's the upshot: one of the finest girls on the property, likely to have a score of children, is a runaway, and one of the best servants I have as sulky as a bear. Ask madame what she did it for, and I'll be roasted whole if she can tell you," and out of the door flung the Custos, to vent the rest of his perplexity and anger on the overseer, the housekeeper, or the first dog or cat that crossed his path.



CHAP. XXIX.—HURRA! FOR PRINCE JOHNNIE.

WHEN Louis was gone, Stella slipped quietly into her own room. She sat down to read the service for the day to herself, her arm leaning on the table, her cheek on her hand. Her eyes were on the page, but her thoughts had wandered; once, nay twice, she roused herself to attention, but it was pretty nearly in vain. Her eyes were gradually upraised, and she sat like one listening to heavenly music. She could not have put her feelings into words, and yet she knew she was happy. Aunt Portia's visions, her father's coarseness, Mrs. Joddrell's temper, were all alike wiped from her recollection. The skies she saw were so blue, the earth so fresh and green. The Great House of Cedar Valley has been described as in the

shape of a T, the bedrooms branching off right and left down the centre, the long hall at the top and the small drawing-room at the foot. Besides those windows opening on the one side into the garden, on the other into the yard, two of the bedchambers had borrowed lights from the large hall, opaque white curtains maintaining the privacy of the occupants. Stella had been roaming some time in her enchanted world, when she was startled back to this earth by the gaze of a pair of keen eyes, and she saw that the protecting curtain had been shoved aside, and that Miss Portia was watching her. "I wanted to see what you were about," said Miss Portia, candidly. "Dreaming, not praying. Well, well, one can't put gray heads on young shoulders. Dream, child, as long as you can," and the curious old woman let fall the curtain, and withdrew once more to her covert.

After dinner some of the negroes came with little presents, carved calabashes, necklaces of Job's tears or of the Jumbo-berry. Mr. Joddrell gave Stella and his boys money to distribute, and as the family sat in the porch exchanging kind words and deeds with their slaves, it formed quite a Biblical scene. Impossible to imagine any one of these persons to be the author of the barbarity of the day before. Tyranny, suffering, revenge? why you must have laughed to scorn any such supposition had you been a spectator of the groups round the hall door of the Great House of Cedar Valley on that Christmas evening. Mr. Boggis was seen walking in lonely state on the Barbecues. Mr. Joddrell sent for him, and formally introduced him to Mrs. and Miss Joddrell. "A glass of wine, Boggis, to the ladies' health; then another to a happy Christmas to us all. Come here, Johnnie. I say you," the Custos was now addressing the blacks, "here's your little prince: the prince of the blacks, not the Black Prince. Eh, Boggis? not bad that. Hurra! for Prince Johnnie."

Mr. Joddrell held the child up in his arms, that every one present might see him. "Hurra! for Prince Johnnie, hurra! hurra! hurra!" shouted the negroes; the black boys tumbling head over heels to show their loyalty and joy.

"Entailed the properties, Mr. Boggis," said the Custos, growing momentarily more communicative.

"A fine inheritance, sir," observed Mr. Boggis.

"There'll be plenty for them all, Boggis, but entails keep properties safe, so here's a health to the heir apparent; a bumper, Boggis."

Stella overheard aunt Portia moaning inside her sedan-chair. "Calista and Diana, hearie, dance comba for young missus. Lor ! how well she danced it when she wasn't three years old ; she shook her little figure, and twisted and twirled like a snake." Here Mrs. Joddrell thought it right to propose to Stella to go to the drawing-room. "Not a bit, not a bit," stuttered Mr. Joddrell ; "let the girl see the fun ; now for it, ladies," (to the black girls) ; and the Custos himself began the song that accompanied the dance.

Mrs. Joddrell was more cheerful, more kindly in her manner next morning at breakfast than Stella had seen her. Her tone was playful with her husband, and he was in radiant good humour. By-and-by, the cause of this domestic sunshine was made public. The family were to go down to the Lowlands within the week. Mr. and Mrs. Joddrell and Stella had received an invitation to dine at Government House on New Year's Day. The news did not seem very glorious to Stella, to judge from the expression of her face when she heard it. Mr. Joddrell, little penetrating as he was, noticed the contrast between his daughter's pale serious face, and his wife's bright one. "Come, cheer up, Stella," he said, "you'll not hear of negroes for the next three months ; you shall have *carte blanche* for whatever finery you want ; come, let's have smiles—I hate cloudy faces." It was the first approach to any fatherly feeling Mr. Joddrell had shown to Stella, and in an instant her heart opened to him, and she took his hand and kissed it. "I believe there never was a woman born whose heart did not quiver at the idea of a new dress," observed Mr. Joddrell.

"Indeed, papa, it was your kind voice, and not about dresses I was thinking," said Stella, earnestly.

He laughed. "Never mind, Stella. I don't think the worse of you for loving finery ; I don't want a daughter of mine to set up for a blue-stockings. Dress and look as pretty as you can, that's a woman's business."

After this, great bustle of preparation began within and without the house, and master, mistress, and servants heartily desired Miss Portia's absence. Not that she gave much trouble, but there was something oppressive in her mere presence—something startling in her way of moving about. Wherever you least expected to see her, there she was, always like one who is searching or listening. Miss Portia gave no signs of intending to move. Day after day she con-

tinued her capricious proceedings, diving into her sedan-chair and remaining hid during the hours of daylight, prowling about after dark, and causing a succession of little screams from every negro girl she met in her peregrinations. Stella was the only one who ever voluntarily approached the old lady's fortress, and she would often go to the side on which the window was let down, and begin a conversation. Stella was in hopes of hearing one particular name. She should be so sorry to leave home without saying good-by at Silver Hill, and yet she had not the courage to speak of her wish to go over there; as for another impromptu visit that was out of the question. So went over three days: on the morning of the fourth, as she was taking her usual ride, French Charles suddenly appeared in her path. Stella felt her face colour; she intended to say "Good morning," and pass on, but the man stood so directly in her road that she was forced to stop. French Charles put his hand on Janet's head, stroking it, but Stella felt that he had something to say which he intended to force her to hear. In her embarrassment she said, "How are you, Charles?"

"Thank you, good young lady, me so-so." His face, from a fine healthy black, had faded into a yellowish hue, a sign of sickness, and his hair had a look as if sprinkled with flour. Gracious God! has any of thy creatures a right to inflict such suffering on another, as to change thus in a few hours the colour of the hair of a head. "Young missus, I come to ask you as a Christian woman to tell me de trut (the truth). Negro say, Massa Joddrell buy me for his slave."

"Yes, Charles, it is true."

"Garamighty have mercy on me!" said the black, sweat-drops rising on his bold brow. "Young missus, I work, work, year upon year; I get money togedder;" the whole face was twisted with agony for a moment, then he tried to speak again, but his voice was gone, absolutely lost through emotion: he could only whisper now. "Young missus, me good young missus, tell Massa Joddrell it better to sell me away again; me no do one good day's work no more; me done for." Stella placed her hand kindly on the black man's, which was still resting on her mare's head. "Charles, I know you are a clever man, and quite different from the people here; don't you remember that Jesus Christ was badly treated, and scourged, beaten with whips and spat upon. God's own Son and our Lord, and He said: Not my will

but Thine, O Father, be done, and he prayed for those who ill-used Him, saying, they did not know what they were doing."

Charles shook his head. "The debbil nearer to me dan God. Do, me good lady, do hab me send away," and he, the slave and the black, wrung the white girl's hand.

"I did beg very hard for you, Charles, and you know it was in vain."

"God bless you, now and for ever, Amen, and be wid you all yer life long; me blessed young lady."

Stella did not wait for her courage to evaporate. "Papa!" she said, "Papa, I have seen French Charles; his hair is actually turned gray. Papa, you must hear me out. I am frightened when I think of the anguish of that poor man; if anything happens to him—if he dies—papa, God will require the blood of that man at your hands."

"And what does your saintship ask for him?" said Mr. Joddrell, in a white rage.

Stella's heart beat fast, but her glance at her father never quailed. "I would not trouble you nor anger you, papa, if I were not sure it was my duty; he begs you so very hard, papa, to sell him, or send him away."

"The deuce take him! Does he expect to be better off with another master?"

While Stella was hesitating how to frame an answer so as not to injure her cause, there came a voice from the sedan-chair, saying—"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Mr. Joddrell turned, and said to his daughter, "Madame Stella, I advise you to keep clear of tempting me into a passion with you again; do you hear me? If you didn't look so uncommon handsome, I'd be tempted to give you a taste of the rod yourself. Get along with you, and keep that tongue of yours quiet. Just let me catch you talking to that black fellow any more, and I'll have him down again for another three dozen and three."



CHAP. XXX.—WOE TO THE CONQUEROR.

THE dwellings in the neighbourhood of Kingston and Spanish Town in Jamaica answer to the villas in the outskirts of London and other great towns in England. The house on

Meriton Pen, where the Joddrells have arrived, is a long building with piazzas all round—that is, with wide verandahs closed in by jalousies, and with glazed windows corresponding to the windows of the room they shelter from the blaze of a tropical sun. Its construction differs very slightly from mountain houses, except that it consist of two stories; the reception-rooms and bedrooms of the family are on the upper story, approached from the outside by a double flight of steps. The offices are on the basement floor. It is no rule that these so-called Pen-houses should have two stories, or be surrounded by grounds, or be situated in the middle of pasture lands. Some even abut democratically on the highroad. Meriton Pen did not belong to Mr. Joddrell, but to an absentee in England, for whose properties the Custos was, what is called in island phraseology, “planting attorney,” *i. e.*, the person who visited the absentee’s estates once or twice in the year, to see into their state of cultivation, to hear complaints, redress grievances, and authorize supplies. The commission for these services was one source of income to many of the residents in the colonies. Mr. Joddrell let his own Pen to a very great Government man, and had Meriton Pen for himself gratis. If people will not or cannot live where their interests should make them, if they will not fulfil the duties all kinds of property entail on the possessor, they must be prepared to accept the consequences.

It is New Year’s Day. The Joddrells only reached Meriton Pen the evening before, and consequently they are still unsettled. Open trunks, half their contents strewn about, are making Mrs. Joddrell’s bedroom a labyrinth more difficult to thread than the one in Crete. Mrs. Joddrell herself is standing before a large Psyche mirror; a magnificent wreath of geraniums is round her brown hair; she has on the new white satin dress, her husband’s Christmas gift, and is only waiting till her maid can find a particular lace trimming that is to be fastened round her shoulders. Mrs. Joddrell shows none of her usual impatience. She is studying the reflection of her own image with satisfaction. She stoops forward to look closer at the curl near her eyebrow; to bring more into view her ear-rings. She turns her head to look over her shoulder. “What a difference dress does make!” she exclaimed, with complacency, to Stella; and then, as her eye lights on the modest white muslin of her stepdaughter, she adds, “If I had thought your aunt would have let you come

without a proper ball dress, I would have ordered one for you. Come here, and let me put this white rose in your hair." Stella knelt down before her stepmother; just then the black nurse shoved in her head. "Missus, please, massa say——"

"Oh! tell him we shall be ready directly," said the lady, without turning her head, but Stella caught sight of the woman's face, and she exclaimed, "What is the matter, Baba?"

"Massa say missus please come to him."

Mrs. Joddrell said sharply, "You have let baby fall."

"No me, missus."

"What is it, then?" and out ran the frightened mother into the piazza. Mr. Joddrell was there shining and spruce, Johnnie was on his knee, and the under-nurse, a young mulatto girl, was walking up and down trying to hush the whimpering of the baby she was carrying. Johnnie held out his arms to his mother. "George, how could you terrify me so!" exclaimed Mrs. Joddrell. "I thought some dreadful accident had happened to one of the children; I live in constant dread when I am here of those piazza stairs," and forgetting her dress, Mrs. Joddrell took Johnnie from his father's knee, kissing him over and over again.

"Mamma! Johnnie's skin hurt him."

"Oh, heavens! the child has got fever. You must send for Dr. Whitehead directly. I shan't go out; you and Stella go; you can easily make an excuse for me," and she sat down with the child on her lap.

The girl with the baby had wandered into the inner room, she always trying to hush its little whimper. "Yes; we'll send for the doctor," said Mr. Joddrell, in very husky tones. "Who is there?" clapping his hands.

"Look at the child, George; oh! my darling, my darling—I cannot hold him. What makes him double himself so?"

Stella and all the women servants rushed into the piazza at his cry of agony. "Stella! look at Johnnie. What's the matter with him? He is your little brother, you know." The paroxysm, whatever it was, ceased, and the child looked up and smiled at Stella.

"Where is baby?" went on Mrs. Joddrell. "I am sure I hear him crying."

"Are you ill, papa?" suddenly asked Stella, going close to Mr. Joddrell. He did not seem to have heard her question. "Papa, you must lie down; poor papa, you must not be so alarmed," and she took his arm, guiding him to a sofa.

"Better put de chile in hot bath," said the grave voice of Manie, the housekeeper, "he hab got inward fit."

"Don't talk, but do it," cried the distracted mother. Manie, as she was leaving the piazza, beckoned to Stella. "Miss Ella, dem chilren pisoned. I see it, dem dead chilren dis bery evening. You go look after de baby and keep it out de moder's sight. De children save de fader. O Lard! dy way bery strange and real curious. Go dere, young lady," pushing the awe-stricken girl into the room where the baby was, "and Lard hab mercy on dat pore 'ooman." Dr. Whitehead came on the messenger's horse, but before he arrived Johnnie was struggling in the agonies of death—his tender limbs livid and convulsed. The moment he saw the child, he said to the nurse, "The boy has eaten something that has disagreed with him. Have you let him have pepper-pot or what?"

"No, me good massa; he hab him rice and milk, a piece of yam, dat all, so help me Gad, massa."

"Come, try and remember; he got out into the yard by himself?"

"Me tell you true, massa, me no lose sight de chile one single minute."

"Johnnie get flip," murmured the little sufferer, in a short interval of ease. "Johnnie ask, and papa give some to Johnnie and baby."

"What does he mean?" asked the physician.

"Massa egg flip, saar," answered the nurse.

Here the Custos staggered up, "It was poisoned, poisoned, doctor; that d—d devil Charles." The shriek that Mrs. Joddrell uttered made Dr. Whitehead turn cold. "Don't believe it, doctor," she said; "don't believe it, it's not true; the child has got a little fever, my poor little boy; but he'll take his medicinelike a darling and soon be well again. Mamma's darling is always good;" her own words brought tears to her eyes.

"Don't cry, mam-mam; Johnnie will take his stuff."

"As for him," continued Mrs. Joddrell, pointing to her husband; "don't you see—he's drunk, quite drunk; he's always so—he doesn't know what he's saying. Now, doctor, give Johnnie something to make him well." She managed to speak cheerfully. Dr. Whitehead with trembling voice gave his orders to Manie, who looked stately as destiny itself. Mr. Joddrell, who was ill, and not drunk, was carried to a bedroom; the horses were taken out of the carriage, and men despatched on them for more advice and for various remedies.

"Suppose we carry the dear little fellow into your room, my dear madam; allow me to help you."

"No thank you, doctor; a mother knows best how to carry her sick child." Dr. Whitehead, though a man of experience, felt himself quaking as they entered the bedchamber.

"Miss Joddrell," said Mrs. Joddrell, politely introducing Stella to the physician. "My husband's daughter by his first wife. Is baby asleep? He is not so pretty as Johnnie; he's more of a John Bull." Another shriek, and another, as her eyes fell on the infant lying on the bed.

"Mrs. Joddrell," expostulated the doctor, "you must be quiet and composed, or I must put you out of the room."

She was quelled directly, poor soul. "I was frightened, doctor," she said, submissively.

Hours passed; to every one in that stricken house they seemed only so many minutes. All the principal medical men of Kingston were gathered now round the bed of the dying children, now by the bedside of their father, curling up like flax in the flame. "Stella! Stella! where's Stella?" called Mrs. Joddrell.

"She's with her father," answered some one.

"I want her," cried Mrs. Joddrell, imperatively. As soon as Stella came in, her stepmother beckoned her to her side, whispering, "Miss Portia's dream; it's coming true. Did she say *he* would die too?" A little while after, one of the doctors laid the baby in Stella's arms. Mrs. Joddrell looked up. "I am sending it to another room that it may not be disturbed," he said. The poor baby was dead, nothing would disturb it more. Quietly and lovingly Stella carried it close to her own warm heart, and placed the cold little form on her own bed. It was not the first time she had knelt near to death. "If God would only take us all to himself," she thought, "there would be no more tears, no more suffering for us."

"Miss Stella!" says Manic, "de doctor says you hab to come back."

"Johnnie wants a song, Stella," cried Mrs. Joddrell. "I'm so hoarse I can't sing; but you can—a merry song now, Stella."

Stella strove to remember any of the nursery rhymes she had learned for Johnnie's sake. "Sing," said her step-mother, but the girl's memory was gone.

"Whither—oh, whither—" she stopped with a quivering laugh.

"Poor little Bo-peep," whispered Johnnie.

“Bo-peep, my darling?” asked the mother—he nodded.

Stella knelt down before Johnnie—the effort almost choked her; the poor little boy trying all the while to repeat the last words of each line after her, as she had taught him; at the end of the first verse the singer’s voice gave way. “Go on; don’t you see the good it is doing the child?” asked Mrs. Joddrell, fiercely.

“Little Bo-peep fell fast asleep—” Here Johnnie seemed to wave his little hand.

“He’s better,” said Mrs. Joddrell to Dr. Whitehead, “he smiled on me just now.” The doctor suddenly bent over her, and tried to lift the child from his mother’s arms.

“No, no! you will hurt him; mamma’s arms never can hurt Johnnie, can they? my bonnie, bonnie birdie.” Oh! poor mother, poor mother! Johnnie’s spirit was already with God.

PART III.

"Good Heart breaketh ill Yap."



CHAP. XXXI.—WHITHER? NORTH OR SOUTH?

STELLA is an orphan and an heiress! No one ever told her how her father died, how his bruised body had been found lifeless under his bedroom window. A few hours previously, the medical attendants had given hopes of his recovery, and Stella had been persuaded to lie down on a bed, leaving her father to the care of the experienced housekeeper, Manie. A morning and an evening had elapsed since the dear children's death; an express had been sent to Silver Hill to request Mr. Gautier to come down and attend the funeral of the poor little innocents. When Louis arrived at day-break of the next morning, he was taken to the spot where a formless heap lay—George Joddrell's mortal frame. The housekeeper declared then, and at the inquest, that she had left her master but for five minutes, to get him the lemonade he had asked for. On her return, finding his bed vacant, she and the other servants had sought him, first inside the house and then outside. "Why should she tell lie? she old Massa Joddrell's slave, she Custos' right hand; he good 'nuff to her, she had no cause complain of him." The jury were convinced that the woman spoke truly. Perhaps he had followed Manie, had seen his dead infants, and been driven mad. Father and children were interred in the same grave. He looked, as they laid him in his coffin, as placid as though he had known no more of wrath, no more of the earth's impurities, than his two baby boys. A great stir and great excitement had been occasioned by the tragedy at Meriton Pen. Placards were posted in all the towns and public places in the island. The Colonial Government offered a large reward, and the widow of the deceased promised a second still larger, for the detection of the criminal, supposed, so the notices stated, to be a negro, generally known by the name of French Charles, who had

absconded from Meriton Pen. The housekeeper and some other of the house servants were put in prison for a time, in the expectation that they would give some information as to the accused, but eventually released, as they persisted in declaring their ignorance of all concerning him. When Mr. Joddrell's will was opened, it was found that the estates of Cedar Valley and Belfield were limited to his eldest son John for life, with remainder to his children ; failing lawful issue, to the second son, George, with the same restrictions, and so on ; every possible precaution to secure the entail, the last limitation being in favour of his daughter Stella, and her children. The property of Marlborough Castle and some houses in Kingston were left to his wife for her life, with remainder, as before. Louis Gautier and the family lawyer were named as trustees.

It was at first feared that Mrs. Joddrell had lost her reason, so bewildered and incoherent was she ; and one of the most painful symptoms of her condition was the violent and open aversion she showed to her stepdaughter. The mere sight of her brought on frightful attacks of hysterics, followed by ravings, in which she mingled the names of Rebecca and Charles with that of Stella, in a manner most heartbreaking to the latter. The physicians recommended that Mrs. Joddrell should be sent to England, to the care of her own family ; change of scene would bring change of ideas. Louis spoke to Stella on this subject

"Do you mean to accompany Mrs. Joddrell to England?" Stella's pale lips moved as if with a smile, but so pathetic, that it was more touching than tears. "Cousin Louis, do you not see that there is a fatality attending me. I have never known what family love and tenderness is. I had so hoped in little Johnnie——" she did not go on. "Everywhere I go, I am rejected ; my poor stepmother, whom I would so willingly serve as a daughter, has taken a real hatred to me ; in the agonies of her grief she sees in me almost an accomplice of the murderers of her children ; she resents my life having been spared ; she looks on me as the usurper of her boy's rights. Even had she remained in Jamaica, I must have sought another home than hers."

Louis thought a little ; he was very evidently troubled. "You are aware that as one of your guardians I am obliged to inquire into your plans."

"I should like to have a home of my own, cousin Louis ; I

long so to be quiet, not to feel that I am on sufferance in other people's houses."

"But you are too young to live by yourself anywhere, least of all on a Jamaica property. I see but one feasible plan, if you persist in your idea of not going to England. You must come to Silver Hill, at least for the present, where you will have the protection of my mother."

Stella looked at him, and with her usual candour said, "It displeases you that I do not go to England, or perhaps I shall be a trouble to you at Silver Hill. I think Aunt Portia would stay with me at Cedar Valley; and indeed, cousin Louis, you must have patience with me, if I don't go away. You cannot imagine, for you have never realised, what it is to be with others, to feel as one of them, and to be made conscious that they think of you as one apart from themselves. Oh, cousin! I shall never forget the agony I endured when I knew that Auntie wished to get rid of me. Those who are rich in love take no thought of the poor."

"You mistook my meaning. I was thinking how *we* should suit you. You have no idea how retired a life we lead; no company comes to Silver Hill, we are all seriously occupied; it will be to a young lady like being buried alive." Stella pointed to her deep mourning. "Yes, yes," he continued, rather impatiently; "but you are become rich; you are no longer cousin Stella, but a great heiress. It is as well to speak plainly at first as at last, and heiresses attract suitors as flowers do bees. I warn you, we cannot make any alteration in our secluded habits." Instead of resenting these rather churlish observations, Stella asked, "How rich am I, cousin Louis?"

"The two properties will give you at least two thousand a year; ten years ago your father had nearly treble that income, ten years hence you may not have as many hundreds as you have thousands now."

"And how much shall I require to spend?"

"That depends on yourself."

"I never had any money, cousin Louis, and I cannot know how much I shall cost you."

"Oh, that's it! You are a very matter-of-fact ward."

"Am I? Don't you remember telling me that Aunt Portia could not free her negroes, because she could not pay the fines for them? I thought I might be able to save and have the money ready for mine."

"As to freeing your negroes, you cannot do it, Stella; the properties and negroes are entailed, and you have only the use of the money they give, for your life."

"And who gets them afterwards?"

"Your children, if you have any."

"Can any one prevent my paying the negroes for their work the same as if they were free?"

"Yes; I can, and your other guardian, as long as you are a minor."

"Would you object, cousin Louis, to putting the money I don't need to use into some safe place, till I am old enough to have my own way?"

"Certainly not," he answered,

"And you will settle everything for me, and tell me how much you will allow me for pocket-money."

"I will consult with your other guardian."

"Must you? I would much rather you would do everything for me yourself, just as if it were all your own, or ask your mother."

"You are a person of too much consequence now for cousin Louis to take the whole responsibility of your affairs."

Stella was not repulsed; she believed in cousin Louis, and besides, she was not one who thought she had claims on any one. It seemed an almost self-evident arrangement that Stella should go to Silver Hill. Her relationship to Mrs. Gautier, Louis being her guardian, and the proximity of Silver Hill to Cedar Valley, all appeared to determine this step. But Louis, who had hitherto taken the opinion of the world very little into his calculations, was suddenly seized with scruples as to the propriety of the plan; he might be accused of wanting to keep the heiress to himself—and of all things of which he had a horror, it was that of a wife richer than himself. Stella's other guardian being an old bachelor, added to other circumstances of his life, rendered it impossible she should go to him. It was thus that Stella came to be domiciled at Silver Hill. It is never a small event, the reception of a new member into a family; a certain breach is thereby made in habits of long standing; conversation can no longer roll on smoothly, allusions have to be explained, an insight into the former history of the domestic circle given to the new-comer. It must also happen that each individual who has passed early youth, reconnoitres the character of the other, to see what confidence may be accorded. In fact, the position is always

one of restraint. Stella, at nineteen, did not see in Louis Gautier's home a small white house, simply furnished, perched on the top of a hill, which put your neck in jeopardy every time you rode up or down, but saw in it an oasis in a desert, an ark of safety from the storms of the world. It seems strange, may be, that she entertained that species of veneration for her cousin which made her, what her original nature did not, gentle and yielding. His manner to her had scarcely ever been other than grave and resisting, often nearly repulsive. But did you never watch in a family, a mother speaking and acting severely towards one child in particular, and yet that child be, perhaps, not only the most loving, but the most confiding of the little flock. The mother knows that she dreads her own secret partiality; the child knows it as well as she does. Perhaps Stella had some such perception with regard to her cousin; perhaps there had been a tone or a look tempering his words, words that look so harsh on paper; or perhaps she had no reason for feeling as she did, except that he was cousin Louis, and she was cousin Stella.

"Do you know why I love you?" said a French lady to her affianced bridegroom. "For Heaven's sake, madam, do not try to find out, otherwise I shall be sure you do not love me," was the answer.

The late frightful tragedy in her family had been more terrible than heart-breaking to Stella. Though so nearly connected, the victims were, in point of fact, almost strangers to her; they were not twined in with every fibre of her being; there had been a destroying crash, but no carrying away and burying under its ruins old associations, old memories, a lifelong sympathy. She had trembled under storm after storm, and now she was thankful to feel her heart and soul convalescent in an abode of peace. Frightened and sick with terror was the orphan girl when Mrs. Gautier took her in her arms, and with a little tender formality welcomed her "home." It was the first time Stella had been told to feel any place a "home." Imagine yourself in Stella's position, with the natural longings of a fine disposition after affections, feeling instinctively that an empty heart constitutes real beggary, and suddenly transported from the blackness of such poverty to the brightness of its opposite. What wonder that when she found herself actually in Louis Gautier's home, the young pilgrim felt as if she had reached a holy sanctuary?

If Louis had shown small anxiety to receive her, there were nevertheless many signs of friendly thoughtful preparation for her coming. The room appropriated to her was the most cheerful in the house. The hangings had a freshness and delicacy of colour, harmonizing well with the idea of youth; books chosen with care were in a pretty moveable case; the only pictures that Silver Hill possessed had been transferred to her walls—they were water-colour sketches of rural life in an old French style; a work-table stood before a cane sofa, drawn to the window. Oh! what a lovely view, extending even to the Blue Mountains! Jessamine stars peeped in at her, and the perfume of orange-flowers was in the air.

Stella was fascinated, bewitched with the place. She was so happy to be alone, that she might touch and examine everything in this room. What a charm there was in the chairs and tables, and wardrobes. "I shall read all these books, I shall work so long—just there, where the table is placed for me; but I shall read far away from the window, that I may not be idle with constantly looking out." Happy moments! enjoyed even while yet her pale cheeks and heavy eyes told of sorrow endured.

The next time she saw Mrs. Gautier alone, Stella said, "Maman, how kind of you to give me such a pretty room."

"Louis and Olympia arranged it for you, my dear." Stella thanked Olympia also, but she never said a word of gratitude to cousin Louis. She speedily learned the habits of the house; one of them was the most rigid punctuality in the assembling together for meals. Excepting at these stated hours, the most perfect independence of each other reigned. In a very few days Stella knew to the minute when she should see Louis. The Maman, this was the tender name given to Mrs. Gautier by the whole family, even the domestic slaves spoke of her, and called her "Maman," instead of missus. The Maman seated at her buhl writing-table, in the general sitting-room, her large Bible generally open beside her, was ever ready to be applied to. In the back piazza, within her sight, were two young negro women, constantly employed in needlework. The damask and linen of the house were the Maman's special care and pleasure; they were the only luxury seen at Silver Hill.

Stella oftentimes, seated in the low chair by the Maman's side, had plenty of opportunity of seeing and judging of Olympia's position in the family. She was an eminently

active woman, with a clear shrewd head; a perfect arithmetician, she was what is common in France, rare in England—a business woman. All the accounts of the property were kept by Olympia; she wrote the letters, distributed the clothing: she was, in fact, Mr. Gautier's clerk or book-keeper. He was the manager of the cut-of-doors work, she of the office, they worked together as if they had both been men. For the present, Stella wondered at Olympia; she placed her incalculable degrees above herself. How childish, how ignorant, how incapable she felt of taking any serious part in life. It was her first initiation into the knowledge that a woman might take a serious part in a man's life, a knowledge which books as yet had not given her, still less any of her own experiences. Louis consulted Olympia as an equal, she advised him as an equal. "Now I perceive," said Stella to herself, "why Louis told me I didn't understand what I was asking, when I begged him to let me be his friend." The greatest desire and ambition in Stella now, was to have Louis talk to her as he did to Olympia, instead of changing the subject of his conversation whenever he addressed herself. The somewhat unceremonious fraternal manner he had with Olympia was, for Stella, the aim of her ambition. She fancied he looked down on her when he spoke gently to her of books and flowers. "Did he think, then, that she took no interest in his affairs?" There was always a little stroll after the five o'clock dinner; either on the road under the large gray rocks, shady from the high trees and luxurious tropical vegetation; or else there was a leisurely saunter up and down the terraces round the house, among the orange-trees and oleanders, with an extensive view, to pleasure the eye. In the evenings Louis generally read one newspaper, and Olympia another. They both earnestly watched the signs of the times, occasionally discussing events and measures.

Stella sat by the Maman, busy with some embroidery, or other ornamental work, happy and satisfied in cousin Louis' home. Look across a wide valley, it seems to you a level surface; gaze up at a mountain, and you believe it one large protuberance of the earth. On a nearer sight, you find undulations in the valley amounting to hills, and in the mountains, sinkings equivalent to valleys. It is only when the gloss of novelty wears off that you begin to understand a new spot. For a time, every one and everything at Silver Hill wore a tint of uniformity to Stella; then she began to

espy various shades and colours. She had fancied the Maman to be the serenest of mothers. Well, one day, herself unseen, Stella had watched tears falling down Mrs. Gautier's face; the next time Louis came into the room, he asked, "Where's Olympia?"

The Maman said in an humble tone, "Can I be of use to you, my son?"

"Thank you, dear Maman," he replied; "it would give you a great deal of trouble to understand what it would take me an infinity of time to explain; Olympia knows all about it."

"He forgets," said the Maman to Stella, as he hastened away, "that for half his life I managed the property," and an air of dejection and mortification spread over the Maman's countenance. Stella refused that evening's walk, and sat herself down resolutely in the low chair by the buhl writing-table, and with a sweet cunning led the Maman to talk on a subject, that is, on *the* subject, which had in it no monotony for either. They talked of Louis; and Stella listened greedily to all the wonders of his childhood, of his beauty, his cleverness, his goodness. From Louis, the subject wandered to the years of the Maman's youth, and the persons and scenes of that time. Youth lends bright colours, sometimes memory bestows even brighter hues.

It is sad when old people ruminate over long past joys, but sadder when they are seized by a sudden ardent longing to repossess themselves of some of their former interests. The Maman all at once ceased speaking, clasped her hands in a sort of despair, looking up with an appealing glance; the next moment she exclaimed, "It is all right, it is in the course of nature," opened her Bible, and the hope of coming immortality restored her momentarily interrupted serenity. This little scene greatly impressed Stella. She renounced the schemes she had made of a course of study, of pursuing her music and drawing, of portioning out her morning hours in an endeavour to excel, a wish to do which had lately risen in her breast. A softer ambition took the place of the former; she did not say it even to herself, but her desire was to do for cousin Louis that duty which his daily avocations hindered. The following morning, when she saw the Maman take up her work, Stella, instead of retiring to her pretty room, appeared with a book in her hand. "I am going to read you my favourite story, Maman. May I?" The story,

as may be easily guessed, was the Bride of Lammermuir. When Stella came to the description of Ravenswood, she interrupted herself to say, her face all in a glow, "Who does that remind you of, Maman?"

Surely in this instance youth and age did agree. How the two did laugh over Caleb's misadventures. Louis passing by came into the sitting-room, attracted by the cheering sound.

"Well, Maman," he said, "what is my ward saying to make you laugh so heartily?"

"Cousin Louis—*did* you ever read the Bride of Lammermuir?" This was the child-like mood in which Stella had always so much attraction for Louis. "Love tales are more in your way than mine, Stella," he replied, his eyes dwelling on her as she bent over her book again. A tender pity came into his face as he gazed at the young cousin, yet pale and with traces of sorrow on brow and mouth; so earnest, too, in its ingenuous sympathy with the "over true tale" she was reading; and a fear as to what might be the fate of this girl, as lovely, as innocent, as confiding in an uncertain future as poor Lucy Ashton, softened his heart towards her more than had ever been the case before. Then her loving companionship to his mother, and the smiles she coaxed on that dear faded face, excited in him an admiring gratitude. He sat on, appearing to listen, but more and more immersed in contemplation of the reader. "Have you forgotten me, Gautier?" asked Olympia, from one of the doors.

"You see what your story has to answer for, Stella," said Louis; "it has made me forget I was keeping Olympia waiting; I'll no more of it." And Louis went away with Olympia to look over some accounts she had been preparing for him. Olympia was very pale as she sat at her desk; her face seemed to have grown suddenly thin; her voice was thick; there was a look of desolation about her whole attitude not to be mistaken. At that instant, she presented a vivid contrast to Stella, a contrast of the fading flower to the young blossom, that had in it a pathos. A discordant element had slipped unperceived within the hospitable doors of Silver Hill. However insensibly it had stolen in, it would not long remain concealed, where there was a life of such intimacy. "Do not sit over these accounts any more," said Louis; "you have, I am sure of it, one of your bad headaches."

"Business first," said Olympia, with a forced smile, "and pleasure afterwards. I shall not detain you long."

"My dear friend, it is not for myself I speak. I am ready to go over a dozen pages, if you will; but you have done enough for to-day."

Here Stella's ringing laugh reached them, and brought an answering smile to Louis's lips. "Our walls must be quite astonished to hear such a happy sound," he observed.

"Yes, indeed," said Olympia; "Stella is still quite a child; at her age, I was an old woman. How quickly she has forgotten the dreadful scenes she witnessed. I wonder when the ray of sun is to fall on her mute heart, and make it give out a sound of music."

"She is young in most things for her age," returned Louis; "but I do not think she is wanting in strong feeling. She shows intelligence and a large heart in all connected with the negroes, the subject that has taken the greatest hold of her."

"Perhaps it may be a superiority to most girls of her age that makes me think her wanting in softness. It requires a good deal of head, not to have taken a horror for the race who destroyed her only parent." As Louis did not immediately reply, Olympia added: "I have probably misunderstood her disposition; one is apt to judge of others by oneself, and I am, I confess it, full of short-sighted prejudice."

"No," said Louis; "but there is a radical difference of constitution between you two. There is an enthusiasm and a oneness of affection about you, in which Stella seems deficient."

That evening the Maman and Stella spent alone. After her usual walk with them, when Stella turned to go into the house, Louis detained Olympia on the terrace. "Won't you come in and hear some more about Caleb?" asked Stella.

"Go on with it to the Maman," replied Louis; "we shall come in by-and-by."

The Maman, as Stella took her usual seat in the low chair by her side, fondly smoothed the thick braids of the girl's dark hair. "I am your child, am I not, Maman?" laying the noble little head on the Maman's knee.

"Yes, my dear one, my good, loving child."

A spark may be the cause of the burning down of a house, and certainly very minute incidents lead to great discoveries. That night Stella was enlightened as to the sentiments subsisting between her and Madame Olympia. "She is not my friend, I feel it," she said to herself; "I have caught at times

a curious cutting look in her eye when it met mine that made me *see* hatred. Louis thinks her perfect; I am sure she is not true. I cannot tell how she manages it; but she in some way prejudices whoever comes into the house against me." This was specially in reference to the medical man of the parish, and who, as the weekly visitor of the negroes both at Silver Hill and Cedar Valley, was more on a footing of intimacy with the Gautiers than any of the other neighbours.

Dr. McNeil was a tall, loosely put together Scotchman—with a broad, childish face; nevertheless, out of his gray eyes there came occasional scintillations, that proved he was not so much of a child as he looked. Mrs. Gautier had consulted Dr. McNeil as to a certain loss of appetite and feverishness that hung about Stella. At first the doctor, in right of his fifty years well completed, had treated the young lady with paternal kindness; a manner which had brusquely changed into a ceremonious politeness with a flavour of acidity. It is most necessary that the physician should have a salutary influence on the moral as well as the physical being of his patient; and Mrs. Gautier, far more perspicacious than she generally had the credit of being, very soon yielded to Stella's desire to be released from Dr. McNeil's care. The young girl had been startled by the transformation of the doctor's behaviour; too much startled not to reflect on it, and try to divine the cause.

Each day that passed Stella perceived that she and Madame Olympia were less and less in tune with one another. Discordant notes were constantly struck when they conversed; it seemed impossible for Stella to speak on any subject without Olympia darting forth sprightly sallies, full of brilliance and venom, buzzing about and stinging her adversary, admirable to the rest of her audience—like those insects with gauzy wings of rainbow hues, which the spectator admires, while they are torturing some patient victim. "I have a great mind to tell Louis that I should like to go and live at Cedar Valley. I am sure aunt Portia would stay with me." And all the time Stella knew she had no mind to say anything of the sort to Louis. Olympia, at the self-same moment Stella was thus soliloquising, was seated before her toilet-table, intently regarding her own image in the glass. Not a line, however trifling, not a flaw, however slight, in the contour of what had once been nearly a faultless face, escaped her investigation. A deep sigh came up from her heart. "To think,"

so she argued with herself, "that the folly of a moment must be paid for by a whole life's misery. Fifteen years since my wedding day, and fifteen more may be added, and I still be bound. Why should marriage be the only blunder that is to be punished as a crime? Why should marriage—Ah! what is the use of thinking about it? Prometheus chained to a rock, with vultures to eat his liver—a woman tied to a heartless man, and the world to peck at her heart—cruelty everywhere, even in dame Nature. She destroys our faces, and leaves our hearts eternally young; very unfair, is it not? I despise myself, after all, as much as I do others. I who have so prided myself on a pure, disinterested feeling for Gautier, what do I find I am reduced to? a calumniator—yes, a calumniator, for I do try to insinuate into his mind that Stella is other than I know she is. I make him understand that she is indifferent, insensible as a stone; and I see as clearly as I see my own pale face in that mirror that she loves him; and he might be so happy with her pure young heart to rest upon, and I come between him and her. It needs only a word from me, or rather it needs but that I allow them to understand one another, her frank nature would soon unveil itself. What would become of me then? Oh, that I had strength to do the right thing!"



CHAP. XXXII.—EQUIVOCATION.

THE next day Stella gave Louis her morning salutation with less in it of aroma from the heart than she had ever done. Her voice, which had lately cheered the breakfast-table like the early song of some favourite bird, was silent. Once or twice Louis looked about him as if missing something; once or twice he glanced at Stella, and then his eyes gradually took an expression of pain and weariness—an expression that had always touched Stella. It had in it an appeal for forbearance; and whenever it was apparent, the whole countenance relaxed, and any observer would have said, "He has met disappointment there where he had been seeking sympathy." Stella felt, rather than thought, this; and she had the consciousness that she had sinned against her cousin. She longed to do or say something to make amends, but even while thinking of how or what, Louis had left the room. The Maman sighed,

and went to her table. When Stella would have gone away, Olympia detained her, saying—"I have no writing to get through to-day, shall we sing some duets to my guitar?"

"I cannot sing or play at sight," answered Stella, coldly; "I should need to learn the songs first with the piano, and there is no piano here; besides I do not sing well enough to take a part with you."

"Is there not a piano at Cedar Valley?"

"Yes."

"Why should you not have it brought here?"

"It would scarcely be worth while," and Stella quickly disappeared, and in a fit of penitence and discomfort went to her own room. There, how everything reproached her, from the jessamine and roses waving their flowers before the window, to the smallest arrangement for her comfort or pleasure.

"I am ungrateful, downright wicked; he took me into his home when I had no one to care what became of me. Oh, silly, selfish Stella!" She lay on her sofa, contemplating the grand scene before her, until the influence of lovely nature softened her irritation into a pleasant melancholy. She was allowing some salutary tears to roll down her cheeks when Olympia came in. "What, crying, Stella! are you unhappy?" and Olympia sat down by the side of her niece. The colour rose in Stella's face. She did not choose to have her feelings investigated; even the lightest and kindest touch on the chords of her heart—at that moment vibrating with a little remorse—would have pained her to the quick. Olympia, she knew, would not spare the sharp probe, if allowed to operate; better be supposed sorrowful or discontented. "Poor little bird!" began Olympia; "you feel like Sterne's starling, weeping because you can't get out." Stella's eyes flashed through the tear drops still hanging on the long lashes.

"I have no need to weep for such a reason as that. I have only to ask, and the door of the cage will be opened, and very willingly too."

Olympia answered—"Neither kindly thought nor kindly spoken; but never mind that—do you know why I have intruded on you, Stella?"

"No."

"Does your conscience not tell you?" A second time Stella said "No," while her eyes fixed themselves keenly on those of Olympia.

"As your aunt, and one with more experience of life, I have come to give you a little advice." Stella sat erect and motionless. "We are a very small circle here," resumed Olympia, "and hitherto we have carefully excluded all elements of discord. The Maman and I, the passive members of the family, feel what is due to the active one, Mr. Gautier, and we have sacredly preserved the tranquillity of his interior." How Stella's blood stirred to hear Olympia talking as if she had a right to consider herself an integral part of the Gautier family, as if Stella were merely an interloper. "He is a man," said Olympia, "who has met with many disappointments, who is chained to a life most distasteful to him; therefore, those who choose to reside in his home ought to consider it their duty not to diminish the comfort or repose still remaining to him by giving way to caprice."

"I think," returned Stella, with a smile, "cousin Louis must be more sensitive than the mimosa itself, if you mean that I disturb him by my caprices. Let us see; we meet, he and I, at breakfast and dinner; I join your walk after dinner, and then all intercourse between him and me ceases. I believe the first time I have ever robbed you of five minutes of his society was yesterday, and that, quite by his own will, I assure you."

"If you wilfully misunderstand me, Stella, there is no more to be said. I can comprehend your feeling the dullness of the place, and its unconsciously making you pettish."

"If I am pettish, it is not the place makes me so," retorted Stella.

"And what is it, then?" Stella answered nothing, but looked out of the window. "Your own words," continued Olympia, "prove that you are displeased with something or some one."

"Olympia," said Stella, "every one may have causes for sorrow or vexation they may not like to explain or discuss. I do not wish to be rude or unkind to you—pray pardon my rough manner. I promise that for the future I shall keep a stricter watch over my behaviour—over my very looks." Olympia rose, bent over Stella, and lightly kissed her forehead. Stella endured the kiss; the instant Olympia was gone she passed her handkerchief over her face. "What is it," she questioned herself, "makes me so harsh? she is right, and I am wrong, and yet my soul rebels against every word she says to me—against every kindness she shows me—and it is

my poor mother's sister that makes me feel this enmity!" Do what she would, Stella could not prevent the outward signs of her inward feeling. Her large, frank eyes, which had hitherto willingly encountered the glance of every creature, at this day's dinner avoided every face but the Maman's; she strove to be polite and was polite, but her usual little brusquerie would have been far preferable. In the after-dinner walk she slipped away from Olympia and Louis. For two or three minutes they did not miss her; when they did, Louis said, "Poor child! I dare say she begins to find the want of companions of her own age."

"I never thought she would stand this quiet seclusion," said Olympia. "It was a girl's whim, but you must not tell her so. Her pride of consistency would take the alarm: no one at her age can bear to be found out in having mistaken their own mind. I offended her this morning by some observations."

Louis repeated quickly, "Offended! what did she say?"

"Oh! I have no complaint to make of her. She has never taken to me, and really it would be preposterous to be annoyed with any one for not giving us their affection."

"It's your nature to make tyrants, and she comes of the race of oppressors; if Stella has behaved impertinently to you, as I suspect, I insist on your resenting it," returned Louis.

"It's not worth the trouble, and besides I had no right to intrude my advice on her."

"You are too soft and yielding to manage a spirit like Stella's," observed Louis. "I had a presentiment of evil when I agreed to receive her here."

"But really," interrupted Olympia, "we must go and look after her."

"No, no," said Louis; then he added, "at all events, you remain here. I will go;" and he walked quickly down the hill. He was impatient, annoyed, not in the least anxious.

"This will never do," he thought; "those cannot dwell together in peace who are not on an equality in knowledge of the world; she longs to try her wings, and we have folded ours."

Louis hesitated to try and understand the real grounds of difference between Stella and Olympia; he was afraid to have to decide between them; he was not prepared to tell Stella they could not live together, for it must be Stella who should

go. Stella had a home and many friends; poor Olympia! there was no shelter for her head but at Silver Hill. She was utterly poor and very friendless; no hands to clasp hers but his and his mother's. Still no Stella to be seen; and now Louis's irritation turned to anxiety. Had she crossed the moat at the bottom of the hill? It was venturesome at that time of the evening. Then remembering that by her unthinking innocence and ignorance of evil she might be betrayed into danger, his heart smote him for his hard thoughts and hard sayings of just now; if any evil occurred to her, he should never know another moment of peace. There were passions afloat at this period among the slave population, and a waning of their respect for the whites, of which lately there had been several examples. A white was no longer the personification of a deity to the blacks, nor were their persons any longer regarded as sacred. Gautier could see some distance along the bridle-road leading to the river course separating Silver Hill and Cedar Valley. No figure was to be seen on it. He turned to the other hand, threading a path which ran parallel to the narrow trench at the foot of the hill. Here he found the truant sitting on a mossy stone that blocked up further progress; her attitude was one of contemplation. Stella allowed Louis to come close to her before she moved even her head; then she raised her eyes to his, and he saw in them the look of the preux chevalier he had noted at Waterloo Cottage.

"Cousin Louis, I did not mean to overhear your conversation with Olympia. I came here without being aware that I should be exactly below the terrace where you were. I heard you say that I was of the race of oppressors, and that you would not allow me to tyrannize over Olympia; I heard you suspect me of impertinence to her. Now, cousin Louis, it was dishonourable of Olympia not to tell you that I had not been impertinent."

"She never accused you."

"No; but her answer was an equivocation."

"You use too strong language," said Louis, sternly.

"I call things by their real names, cousin; when Olympia replied to you, that it was not worth the trouble to resent my conduct, she gave you to understand that I had been impertinent. I am rough, that is true; I had rough nursing: it has, however, made me fearless, and I always speak the truth. I prayed Olympia to pardon my rough manner, and told her

I did not mean to be rude or unkind. I deny having been impertinent; I would not have been so, if only lest I should displease you. Yes; I am of the race of the oppressors, and I have felt even from a child that therefore an implacable destiny dogged my family. See how tragic their fate. Grand-mamma living, dying, so lonely, almost unregretted; and within these few months, Louis, have I not witnessed the murder of my nearest in blood? I, alone, spared, perhaps to expiate the sins of my ancestors. We are all under a ban, cousin Louis. Even the Maman, a saint upon earth, the Maman's heart is crucified—I know it, I feel it; and you, are *you* happy?"

Stella's words were strong, but her voice was low, her manner passionless; it was as if her heart had been stunned.

To her query, "Are you happy?" Louis replied quietly, "No; and now, Stella, let me speak a little in my own defence."

"I do not require you to defend yourself, cousin Louis; there is nothing to defend: you had a perfect right to give your opinion about me; but only Olympia should not have misled you."

"Willingly or consciously she never misled any human being, and as for any want of truth in her, I have yet to find it out. A lie of any kind is a deceit, I include prevarication, and Olympia is one in whom there is neither guile nor bitterness. Learn of her, Stella; she not only forgives injuries, but she forgets having received them; not like me, who am more inclined to acknowledge injuries than benefits."

Stella gave for the first time a sign of impatience. "You think her perfect, then?"

"And why should I not?" he asked, coldly. "Is it because you, who have been here a few weeks, bring a ridiculous charge against her that I am to ignore the experience of years!"

"Let us go home, let us go home, pray." Stella rose from her seat as she spoke.

Without a word Louis put her arm within his: he kept her close to him; they had never walked thus before. Ere they had gone a few paces, he said, abruptly, and in a voice that Stella had never heard from him before—"I will tell you my story. When I was a youth—a long time ago now, Stella—I had high aspirations, an intense longing to be of service, to do good to my fellow-creatures. I believed my heart was

heaving with spiritual power to accomplish some great mission. I believed that my strong impulses, my activity, my energy, were gifts from on high to bring about some great social good. I felt myself a prophet, a liberator; and in what do you think all this intense longing upwards had its origin? In a pair of lovely violet eyes." Stella scarcely breathed. "Yes, little cousin, I was merely in love as a youth of twenty may be; love it was that was inciting me to do, to suffer, to conquer; it was the old, old story—old as the world, yet ever new. But my idol was a false deity; and when I found out I had been worshipping a mask, a thing of pretty shreds and patches, the fine flame of my aspirations, my divine aspirations, went out ignobly of itself. I sunk down into a slave-driver. I do not defend my folly: I tell you the facts. I neither cared for fame, nor for riches, nor for grandeur. Some men take a disappointment of this nature stupidly to heart, and I was one of them. It was not that she refused my love, but that having accepted it, she never understood what it was like; how could she, poor thing? As well ask from the blind mole the gaze of an eagle, as from her the strength to love. When I attempted to pour out the feelings of my soul into hers, there was no depth to receive it, and she cried out against my crotchets.

"Had I gone into the great battle of life, in any of the great places of the globe, probably I should have done like other men; decently buried my early hopes, given hostages to fortune in the shape of a wife and family, and been a tolerably good citizen. Instead of that I came hither to a poor heart-broken mother, to the society of my co-mates, slave-holders, men for the most part filled with new rum, wallowing in the slough of ignorance, lording it over a race degraded to the same level as the mules, their fellow-labourers. Then the men in our Jamaica towns, what were they? Just what Brougham described them. Men whose aim is, not to live, but to gain; not to enjoy, but to save; not to subsist in the colony but to prepare for shining in the mother country, and therefore with none of the proper virtues of the European merchant." The cousins had reached the terrace. Louis turned back with his companion. "To this desert came a woman, several years my senior, and whom longer experience of the world had but rendered more sick of it than I was myself. A noble soul, a strong cultivated mind, an active kindly spirit, she identified herself with our family, adapted herself to our way of life, shared our

labours. Think what it was to me to have such companionship. Manna to the Israelites, water to those perishing of thirst, had not more saving grace. She could equally understand and respond to all the workings of my intellect, or drudge indefatigably for me; *my* hard-working book-keeper, while to my mother she was as a daughter; and this not for one month, one year, but for ten long years. Ours has been a Spartan friendship; she has exacted no small attentions (so dear to women) from me, and I have counted on her interest in my concerns without any wordy assurances from her. The happiness of such a friend, my dear Miss Joddrell, may make up even for the loss of a tenderer tie."

With his eyes full of severity fixed on Stella, and in a stern, low voice, Louis added, pressing her arm so as really to hurt her, "In a word, my cousin, though it were at the cost of my future peace, I will preserve Olympia's tranquillity. No new claim, do you hear, shall interfere with her well-grounded one to my gratitude."

"You cannot marry her," cried Stella, in a sort of wild triumph. Louis struggled against and conquered a fierce movement of passion, before he replied, "You strangely forget yourself; forget what is due to a most estimable lady, one to whom you owe respect, were it for nothing else than that she is under my mother's protection—my mother whom you pretend to trust and revere. No Roman, Stella, holds more sacred the Holy Mother from all irreverent thought than I do poor Olympia. I pity you, my cousin, for harbouring such coarse sentiments."

Stella did not defend herself, and Louis resumed, now almost sorrowfully, "You were right to call yourself rough and fearless. Let us understand one another. You have chosen to make your home in this family; I do not require of you to be just or gentle, but there is one thing imperative on you, you must behave yourself, *if* you remain, with propriety to your mother's sister."

Stella's heart was breaking; she could not have spoken without tears, and she would not have shed one at this minute even to be reconciled to Louis. Her whole soul was in an angry confusion. The moment she saw the Maman, however, she had sufficient mastery over herself to salute her lovingly as usual, to take her seat in the low chair, and ask, in a voice plausibly calm, if she should go on with the book. The Maman said, "Yes," though she very well saw the quivering

of the girl's pale under lip. With the penetration of an almost maternal love, instead of a caress, she asked exertion from Stella.

Louis stayed in the room as long as he could bear the sound of pain in Stella's voice; for the very first time since he had known Olympia, he was impatient under her playful smile; the cheerfulness of her manner distressed him like a false note in music. He wondered that the pitiful voice, reading so steadily, did not excite her tender sympathy.

CHAP. XXXIII.—CARE SITS BEHIND THE HORSEMAN.

Dizzy, amazed, and ashamed, Stella went to her room that night. To have been so rebuked by cousin Louis—to have been told she was coarse. She clasped her hands over her eyes. Was he not justified in saying this? Was it not even worse than coarse—was it not wicked, downright wicked, to be jealous of Olympia? Humiliated, self-condemned, she was, but nevertheless the feeling was not to be scared away. She *was* jealous. Hereupon followed that revelation, the most painful—sometimes the most maddening that can break upon a woman. She loved cousin Louis, and he did not love her; in fact, he had given her a warning and a menace.

"What was the use?" thought Stella. "Could it take the love out of her heart? No; that was impossible, was he not worthy to be loved? Ay, God bless him, that he was—he was the best, the most honourable, sincere, unselfish," here the young heart swelled with a species of pride and joy, forgetting all painful reality. "If Olympia were really good and noble, such as he believes her to be, I would learn to love her for his sake, though he were to *bid* me leave Silver Hill." But Stella's soul sickened and rebelled, because she had discovered, or thought she had discovered, that Olympia attracted Louis by her flattery—her barefaced flattery, and untrue enthusiasm. This inexperienced girl saw that Olympia played off Gautier's sensitiveness and shyness, that she encouraged his natural indolence, blinding him with the smoke of the incense she continually burned before him. "She treats him as a favourite slave, and not as a friend," reasoned Stella. "So that he is devoted to her, she does not care for his being really good; she would not mind, even though he were to

sacrifice himself altogether; he said he was ready to give up his own peace for her; yes, and she would make as though she did not see what he was doing. To amuse or please him, she exaggerates or distorts the truth, and if I try to set the matter in its true light, he thinks me either silly or ill-tempered." Stella remembered an instance in point. Olympia knew that one of the subjects on which Stella was particularly sore was that of emancipation. Never were Olympia's sallies more lively or more pungent than when she attacked the anti-slavery party and the missionary. She would mimic the twang of a Wesleyan preacher she had once heard, and give a parody of his sermon which never failed to make Gautier smile, and Stella laugh in spite of herself. But Stella hated all this sort of humour, and dreaded lest Louis's good intentions of amelioration on Silver Hill should fall a sacrifice to a joke. She had been so often foiled by Olympia, the better cause she defended had been so often made to appear the worse, that Stella had learned to make her silence and gravity alone show her dissent; but one day she had been roused to break a lance, by a sudden and peculiarly disagreeable attack from Olympia. "Look there," Olympia had exclaimed, for her own pleasure, for no one had been disputing the point, "look there, Stella, and say again, if you dare, that those two are of the same species, and fellow-creatures; who can doubt that one of them is made in the image of God? but to say it of the other, were sheer blasphemy." Olympia pointed to two persons standing in the piazza; one was Louis, with his fine forehead, his marked eyebrow, his face full of intelligence, his tall stature, dignified carriage; the other a black man, with every type of negroland in full development; the low brow, the projecting back of the head, the depressed nose, the slouching, knock-kneed figure. Stella, colouring at being defied into such an argument, and cousin Louis within ear-shot, said, "I never heard there were two species of human beings; and I suppose that being made in the image of God, does not mean our actual personal appearance."

"Do you really believe, Stella—now tell the truth, it shan't injure you with the saints—do you really believe that a black is equal to a white?"

"There may be inequality in races, and yet all be human races, may they not? If we only treated these poor creatures like fellow-creatures, they would soon rise from their present degradation."

"Spartacus was a slave, and he was not degraded by slavery," retorted Olympia.

"I did not deny the superiority of the white race, Olympia, but I heard a good and great man say, that with its superiority a mission had been confided to it, to improve the other human families, and by degrees, to impart to them some of their own superiority."

Olympia laughed, and said, "The whites cannot be accused of not trying to impart some of their superiority to the black race." Mr. Gautier, who had not hitherto appeared to be attending to the ladies' conversation, had here turned sharply round, and said, "I think, Stella, you are venturing out of your depth." A great flush had covered Stella's face, and with the pang which brought that deep crimson to her brow, she had felt for an instant as if she abhorred him. A woman does experience actual momentary insanity when the man she loves is unjust to her for the sake of another woman. Her blood boils, and she is capable of committing a crime against him, while she would have borne the same act or word meekly, where no feeling of rivalry entered. How astonished and repentant Stella would have been could she have seen into Louis's mind. It was Stella who was unjust; so it is we grope blindly on in our dealings with one another. It was Olympia whom Louis wished to check; it was with a view to guard the ears of Stella from an unfit topic for her youth and sex, that he had arrested the conversation. How many of us secretly disapprove of certain ways in those with whom we habitually associate; we begin by hiding our disapprobation, either from politeness or interest, or because it is no business of ours, and if we end by forming a friendship for these companions, we balance their bad points with their good ones, and never discover that we are confusing right and wrong, until we are forced to look through the eyes of some other person, as Louis did at that moment, through the eyes of a pure young girl. Olympia was neither more nor less free and hazardous in speech, neither more nor less overpowering in manner that day, than Louis had always known her; yet till then he had always accepted her occasional license of word and opinion, as the counterbalancing defect of the virtue of great candour. Stella, sitting both sorry and ashamed in her own room, suddenly remembered this scene, and the anger she had experienced at the moment it occurred returned. The crimson flush again overspread her face, the same revulsion

against Louis's injustice swelled her heart; she added this offence to the last. She encouraged herself in resentment, in despising his blindness. She assured herself she should be false in being friendly towards her cousin, and thus it came to pass that henceforward in every conversation, whether at table or in the evening walks, let the subject be what it would, Stella found means to attack Louis bitterly. If Mr. Gautier, as he more than once did, sued indirectly for peace or reconciliation, Stella would assume a flippancy so foreign to her character that it deceived no one but herself. It was just at this period that Louis, who had been a model of punctuality, who had entered the house at the stroke of the hour for breakfast and for dinner, who though always, as Stella had remarked, inclined to be taciturn, nevertheless was ever courteous and observant in his family, began to make appearances, not only too soon for meals, but at undue hours. He also often forgot to be polite. He appeared engrossed by some mental difficulty. Was he studying the transformation his lecture had effected on his cousin? for the difference in his habits might be accurately traced back to that date. Was he regretting her having lapsed away from him?—was he wondering why the eyes that had always shone forth such a welcome to him, met him now with a glance cold and gray as flint?—was he longing for the eager smile of child-like confidence? He might study, regret, wonder, and long, as much as he would. She respected his warnings. She was most docile and polite to Olympia, never presuming to interfere with the claims of friendship. Stella was only flippant and talkative in her cousin's presence; when he was away she fell into fits of reverie similar to those he had when in her company. One forenoon that she had been sitting for a long while like a statue of silence, Mrs. Gautier, after watching her for a few minutes, seeing that they were alone, called to her by her name. Stella started, looked hastily round the room, and then with a sigh of relief obeyed the Maman's call. Her old friend stretched out her arms, and the girl laid herself within that tender shelter too oppressed to say a word. The good kind lady turned up Stella's pale lovely face and kissed it, such a caress as reveals a bond of sympathy beyond any mere speech can explain. With Stella leaning against her heart, Mrs. Gautier talked to her of many serious things; told of how she felt her own gradual loosening from mortality, of how mercifully ordained it was that old age should be accom-

panied by a longing for rest ; spoke thus, until she saw the large eyes so wistfully fixed on her soften with tender anxiety. Stella asked, "Are you ill, Maman?" Mrs. Gautier gave her a smiling "No;" but added, that at her time of life, every day brought her a hint of the wearing out of the flesh.

"And have you never said this to any one else, Maman?" inquired Stella, looking alarmed.

"No, my daughter. I have one—only one desire—it is, however, a keen one. Shall I confide it to you?" The softened eyes answered, "Yes;" but there was a little conscious shrinking back.

"I desire to leave to my Louis a recollection of my perfect love. Poor fellow! His is not a happy life. I doubt if happiness now can ever be his portion—fatherless, even before his birth, perhaps to my anguish of mind he owes that extreme sensitiveness which makes him suffer where another would scarcely feel. Oh! my good Stella, pardon me, if I ask you to cease inflicting wilful pain. What an awful thought to come back on us that we have made a heart bleed, when death, or absence like death, prevents the cry for pardon being heard or granted. My Stella, the greatest joys are the most fleeting, but the memory of passions conquered, of having done good to those who love you not, is a perpetual consolation."

"Maman, don't speak so kindly to me, it breaks my heart. I have got all wrong, and I cannot get right again. I cannot help feeling angry—not exactly angry either. I can't describe what it is—and how can I make a show of kindness when I don't feel it?"

"Will you not then strive after the blessing I point out to you, my daughter?" Stella did try. She changed her manner bravely under the fire of Olympia's significant smiles. It was not an easy task the Maman had set her son's ward; the pride of the woman revolted, but the love of the pupil conquered; without any explanation, she passed into a sedate but cheerful intercourse with Louis. She would allow herself no idle time for speculation or reveries. She seemed intent, and was really so, on remedying her want of cultivation.

Louis Gautier, having broken through the regularity of his own habits, could note the changes in Stella. She no longer sat at the Maman's feet wrapped in some tale of love, or leaned from a window lost in thought at the glorious prospects without; still less did he ever see her now wandering among

the flowers on the terrace, or daintily arranging nosegays, or twining wreaths of white flowers for her dark hair. He noted also that she never gave any signs of self-consciousness, nor yet of mortification, when he happened, as at this epoch had become his rule and not the exception, to come home at unexpected hours, and found her studying some very elementary piece of music—the piano had been brought over from Cedar Valley at her request—or busy with some elementary book. She would often even apply to him for an elucidation of any difficulty in what she was reading. To see her so calm and self-possessed, was to be certain she had acquired the mastery over her own mind. On the surface, life at Silver Hill was never more monotonously tranquil. And yet, Louis Gautier walked his coffee plantation an altered man; he was harassed and restless, like one pursued by a secret uneasiness or dread. He fatigued himself and his horse with unconscionably long rides. Motion, rapid motion, seemed becoming the great need of his nature. “Hi—massa, I r’ally believe him ’witched. I don’t feel like him right all someways,” was the observation of the wise heads in the negro huts. Yes; he was rather distracted by the sudden re-awakening of youthful perturbations—he was not unhappy certainly, but perplexed—beset with wishes, beset with fears. Gallop as he would, they always galloped home with him.

CHAP. XXXIV.—THE LADY OF CEDAR VALLEY.

A DAY was fixed for Stella to go over to Cedar Valley with Mr. Gautier; he had proposed it, and she had unhesitatingly acceded to the proposal. Though she shivered at the idea of seeing the place again, she nevertheless drew a kind of joy from the prospect of being supported through the trial by Louis. They would have hours together in which to discuss her affairs, and she might be able, perhaps, to induce him to sympathize with her wish to make expiation for the sins of her race by introducing a mild system of government on her estates. She was very nearly happy the day before the expedition, arranging in her head all she should say to Louis, and imagining his answers. She went to bed with a heart beating high at the promise of a day spent in his society, when her powers would not be neutralized by the influence of Olympia. But none are so obdurate, so ungenerous, as the

jealous. Did Olympia guess or fear that Mr. Gautier, in his inmost heart, was not averse to a *tête-à-tête* with his young cousin? However it was, when Stella came out of her room next morning—she was the first afoot—she saw two horses with side-saddles being led up and down before the house. Her heart sank, the sun of her pleasure set, she met Louis with a darkened brow and a pale face. She was so taken up with her own reading of this unexpected arrangement, that she did not notice an anxiety in his manner. "Not even a few hours' absence will she bear, and she calls it friendship; not even a few hours will he grant me to speak to him alone of my affairs. God knows I have nothing to say but what the whole world might hear, and yet he might have understood that it would be easier to explain my wishes to him alone than with her criticising my every word. He could have repeated everything to her afterwards for aught I cared."

These were the thoughts that knit Stella's brow as she drank her cup of coffee, keeping as far as the table would allow from her cousin and Olympia. In horsemanship, as in every other accomplishment, Stella was excelled by Olympia. Louis held his hand for the latter to mount; she scarcely seemed to touch it with her small Spanish foot, so lightly did she spring into her saddle. Louis would have arranged her habit. "No, no; go and help Stella."

"Thank you, cousin," said Stella, "I must use a chair; I am too awkward to mount with only your hand."

"Hold Miss Joddrell's horse, Maurice," spoke Louis, angrily, to the mulatto man who performed the duties of valet and groom at Silver Hill. Maurice was a fine, athletic young man of six or seven and twenty, clever, intelligent, much trusted by Mr. Gautier for executing commissions in the town. It was to Maurice in general that the escorting the coffee bags to Kingston was entrusted, but lately he had shown signs of insubordination, not so much in act as in looks. A curious devil-may-care expression shone in his eyes whenever addressed by his master or Olympia. To Mrs. Gautier and Stella he was reserved but civil, as a man may be who is so from respect, not from a sense of inferiority. Louis, while proposing to assist Stella, had seen Maurice officiously examining Olympia's stirrup leather. He sauntered towards his master after giving Olympia's spirited animal a sharp tap on the croup that made it spring to one side.

"What the devil are you about, sirrah?" exclaimed Louis.

"Miss 'Lympia grand rider, saar; she ride over house if it stan' in her way."

The man's manner had a peculiarly provoking servile, yet sneering tone. "Keep Janet steady, Maurice, if you please," said Stella, before Louis could speak.

"Are you frightened to ride down hill without your horse being led?" asked Louis.

"I mean to try and be more courageous, cousin Louis; and if you and Olympia will go on first, I will follow."

"No take the crub (curb), young missus," said Maurice, "when any beast good, it go best on de snafful."

What Stella went through during that ride without giving any sign of panic, only very nervous riders can imagine. The river, which she had never yet seen more than the depth of a rivulet, was very full on this day, though perfectly smooth. When they came to its bank, Olympia looked back at her with a playful defying smile, in which there was not wanting a portion of malice. Stella took her courage with both hands, copied Olympia's way of holding up her habit, and bravely let Janet take the water. The next instant Louis' hand was on her rein. "You are very independent to-day, Stella." She did not look up or answer, for the foolish child's eyes suddenly filled with tears. Once again Louis was by her side; it was when the group of high palms in the middle of which stood the Great House of Cedar Valley, became visible. Stella grew very pale. Louis was pale also, but neither of them spoke, for Olympia rode up to them as they were rounding the corner where the road admitted of three abreast.

There was an air of preparation about the place; the jealousies fastened back, and at the porch Mr. Boggis was in waiting. Before Louis could dismount, Stella had accepted of the overseer's assistance, and was on the threshold of the great hall. She stood there, her veil thrown back, motionless, her face like white marble. "This is too sad a place to bid any one welcome to," she said to Olympia; "it would be like bidding them welcome to a tomb: cousin Louis, will you help me to make reparation?" Louis drew Stella's arm within his own, saying, "I will help you in any way you point out, my dear cousin."

"I shall go away for a little," she whispered to him. "I must be alone; when I come back I will be composed, I promise you." It seemed to Stella as if each moment she should see her father and the little boys appear. The hall so full of

their memory brought back her first feelings of horror on their death. In the room she had formerly occupied, Stella lay weeping on the bed; it was sorrow made up of many materials. The door opened gently, she thought it was Olympia, and started up annoyed at being found so overcome; but it was not Olympia crouching at her feet, and kissing them; it was Rebecca, so emaciated that the bones were cutting her skin, feeble as an infant, with eyes dilated by terror. "Me good young missus, me bring de trouble. Garamighty he know it be all my fault, me proud sperrit do it. Oh! Loramighty hab mercy on me; me young missus, put your foot on my head—trample me into de dust; do, me missus, it do me good, it take de fire out my 'art," and the poor creature tried to put Stella's foot on her withered bosom. In vain Stella tried to raise her; Rebecca only grew more excited, beating the floor with her head. "Missus, don't curse him who did it, missus, curse me; it my fault, me egg him on, me de debbil what tempt him. Young missus, dat man gone dead for sorrow, and me—me no can die. I try—I pray God, I pray de debbil himself, I get obi, and I no can die, and go take my share of de flames dat burn for eber. Garamighty him no just to punish Charles alone." Stella sat on the side of the bed holding Rebecca's head forcibly on her lap, and letting warm tears drop on the poor black face. "No cry, no cry, young missus, ebery tear make my sin worse; young missus, for pore nigger's sake, try be happy—eh? be fine rich young lady in Engerland, an' happy, eh? an' no tink no more about what gone by. No stay here, all bad—white man, black man, not a pin to chuse betwixt 'em. Young missus, you go in big ship, and be happy, happy all de day long, eh? and you get good English 'usband and pretty little babies; and oh! young missus, promise to be happy in Engerland, and I die at last, and not care how I punish." As Stella was going to speak, Rebecca raised her finger to her lips, then, gliding like a snake from the young lady's feet, she crawled under the bed. Olympia and Louis had paced up the long hall in silence for some minutes after Stella had left them; Louis quite unconscious of the furtive looks his compazion was casting on him. "What is the matter with you?" she said at last, and in the tone there was a trifle of sharpness. Louis looked at her with surprise. "How? Do you not understand, my dear friend, that it is not the pleasantest of situations."

"You mean your responsibility as guardian and trustee," replied Olympia, wilfully, perhaps, misunderstanding his meaning.

"I was alluding to the poor girl's painful impressions in revisiting this place," said Louis.

"She would be even of harder materials than she is," observed Olympia, "if she had not been a little overcome this morning; but it is a passing emotion. You see how cheerful she has been at Silver Hill. Stella is not of a nature to grieve much or long; luckily for her, she has a monstrous deal of Anglo-Saxon positivism about her," concluded Olympia, as if she had undeniable reasons for having arrived at this conclusion.

"There is more to fear from her romance than her positivism," said Louis, with a half smile.

"Ah!" said Olympia, with a laugh that took all gall from her words; "men judge women differently from what women do; however, I shall go and look after our heiress."

It was Olympia's step that Rebecca had heard stop at the bedroom door. "Are you alone?" asked Olympia, her eye wandering about the chamber. "I thought I heard you speaking."

"Is my cousin in the hall?" questioned Stella, in her turn.

"Yes; but really, my dear girl, I would bathe my eyes before seeing any one; your face is all colours." But Stella went at once to the hall, taking Olympia with her. "Have you any secrets to talk about, or may I stay?" asked Olympia.

"You can stay," replied Stella: then addressing Louis, she said, "I have seen poor Rebecca; she is here—and she seems frightened to meet any one but me. Will you tell Mr. Boggis that she is not to be molested?"

"Certainly, but why should you not give your own orders?"

"You are the real person in authority here" said Stella, "and I prefer that you should give directions; and, cousin, I wish so much you would say to Mr. Boggis that he must not punish with the whip, nor let the drivers of the field gangs have any whips, and that the negroes are to have every Sunday." Louis did not answer directly, so Stella took his hand, saying, in a voice to which strong feeling lent vibrations that betray more than words—a voice that men learn in the long run to recognize perhaps only when they hope in vain to hear it again—"You will not refuse me, cousin Louis?"

"You shall have your own way," he answered.

"You do not think me wrong?" pleaded the winning voice.

"No, but others will do so; we shall be blamed, and accused of sowing discontent among the slaves of other properties."

"But when they see the good effects they will follow our example."

"As I told you before, Stella, you do not know the fate of reformers," and Louis smiled at her eager face.

"But if we are sure we are right, and can make a little happiness round us," said Stella, "we need not mind what the world says. Thank you, cousin Louis. Now I must go and make Rebecca come from under the bed," and she drew away the hand he had retained in his. "Happy child, her tears are easily turned to smiles," observed Olympia, as Stella ran to find Rebecca. Yes, indeed, Stella's eyes were still wet with tears, yet there was a brightness in them; her cheeks were still pale, but the smile on her lips chased away their rigidity. If she had been actually in the arms of death would not Louis's smile have had power to bring a response? Stella knew no grief that a smile of kindness from him would not have softened. Was he not like the light of heaven to her? Did she not feel as if the space, wherever she was, darkened when he left it? Louis did not answer Olympia, because he was growing afraid of discussions with this ten years' friend and companion; and Olympia, the passionate, mature woman, developed to the greatest expansions of woman's nature, read him like a book, saw his struggles, and was not grateful for them; watched the guard he put on himself, lest he should perchance grate on her feelings with bitterness; discerned his reticences, both to herself and Stella, with resentment.

Bitter and resentful, Olympia nevertheless accepted the part that Louis unintentionally had assigned to her. To have kept within the bounds she had done with Stella, considering the lava of jealousy encrusting her heart, was a proof to herself of the reality of Louis's feeling for Stella. She dared not risk an open combat. Do you know to what she trusted for preserving Louis free? Not to any of his noble sentiments, not to his superior qualities of heart and soul. Some women are so constituted, they would consent to keep their influence over a man through his weaknesses rather than lose him. Olympia knew very well that though capable of a strong passion, Louis was indolent and even timid with regard to women; he would

require to have the way smoothed for him, and however Stella's naïveté might betray her partiality, it would never make her take the initiative. So Olympia confided in the force of habit which would render it easier for Louis to renounce a new-born attachment than to break the yoke of an old friendship. While Stella had been urging her request to Louis, Olympia had stood a little apart in the embrasure of the large east window. Louis joined her there, and without continuing the conversation about Stella, he said, examining the sky—"There is a storm brewing; it will burst before night, or I am much mistaken."

"Then we had better not delay much longer," said Olympia; "if we should be storm-stayed the Maman would be full of uneasiness."

"We must perforce wait a couple of hours yet; neither you nor Stella could bear with impunity the noonday heat of the sun. I wish the young lady would come back with the culprits, and allow me to settle my business with Boggis."

Even as he spoke, Stella came in, looking puzzled, "She is gone again, cousin Louis, and no one can tell me anything of her."

"Don't be uneasy, depend on it she's in the bush not far off."

"In the bush!" exclaimed Stella; "but she may be starved to death."

"No fear; when a negro runs away, he is said to be in the bush; most if not all the blacks on the estate will know where she is hiding, they have plenty of secure haunts in uncleared lands; and some one or other of her friends will provide food for the runaway. It is rare that a black betrays another black. Tell Manie or Nancy that Rebecca is forgiven, and she will very soon come back. Now, ladies, I must leave you to take care of one another. We must be ready to start at three instead of four o'clock, Stella, for I am afraid of a storm."

Stella held quite a levée. Men and women came to make their salaam to young missus. "Young missus stan like a palm tree," says one, "she shelter we—she give us nyam nyam" (food). "Young missus, she famous girl," observes another, "de sight of her cure sickness." "She be bright like de sun; she bring light to the eyes of her niggers," remarks a young mother. No queen had ever her delicate hand more kissed, nor perhaps with more real devotion, for negroes in general have a tendency to worship. All were not

so elevated, however, in the expression of their admiration. The men in particular exhibited their emotion by drawing in their breath, and holding their hands to their mouths. After a second breakfast provided by Manie in her best style, and which Stella enjoyed like a girl as she was, because she was at the head of the table and Louis at the foot, the trio set off on their return to Silver Hill. They had reached the descent to the river, when a fat black boy scant of breath ran up to Louis. "Miss Portia beg massa and young missus no go pass Missy's house. De storm it ober massa head." Miss Lowe's mite of estate lay along the course of the river, on the same side as Cedar Valley and opposite to Silver Hill, "I scarcely know what we had better do," said Louis, for true enough large drops began to fall by one and one.

"Massa come," insisted Mercury, "no sabey what on yarth appen, massa say Missy Portia no."

Though rain was actually falling and there were great clouds about, the sun was nevertheless intensely scorching. Olympia, of a peculiarly nervous temperament, felt the coming storm. She was besides terrified by thunder and lightning. Her changing colour decided Louis to take the road to Miss Portia's dwelling. It was a queer square little house; each corner of the roof adorned by a miniature gilded turret. There was no garden, no trees, not even a banana near it. It stood shelterless in the middle of a bare sandy yard. A great dog in a kennel barked at the visitors, and a crowd of fowls, cackling and screeching, took refuge under the house by squeezing themselves through the bars of the stockade on which it was raised. A young negro woman, as fat as Mercury, received Mr. Gautier and the ladies, desiring a fat, lazy old man to take the horses to the stable. Everybody was fat and lazy on Miss Portia's plantation excepting the mistress.



CHAP. XXXV.—THE TAIL OF A HURRICANE.

MISS PORTIA was in her sedan-chair, but it was all carefully closed. The old lady's face looked pitifully out at Louis and his companions. Mr. Gautier called to her to ask what was the matter, and placed his hand on one of the windows, as if to shove the glass aside. "Let it alone, Louis Gautier," bawled aunt Portia, "let it alone: if you open it, I shall blow you all up, and the roof off the house."

"God bless me, aunt Portia! what has made you grow so inflammable?"

"I am full of ether, I tell you. Just as I sent to you I felt it come on, and I bade Diana shut me up."

"Come, come, aunt Portia," said Louis; "this is just one of your attacks of the blues; let me take you out of the chair, and you will be quite well."

"Can't walk, my good boy: my leg died yesterday. I sent for Dr. Mc'Niel, and told him to cut it off, but the fool laughed and went away. I tell you, Louis Gautier, that it will be dreadful by-and-by"

"I am sorry to hear such bad news," returned Louis; "but how did such a misfortune happen to your leg?"

"How can I tell? Who can describe how they die, or any part of them dies?"

"I do not hear you very well," called Louis; adding in a very loud voice, "How do you say it happened?"

"I don't know," shouted aunt Portia.

Louis shook his head, as if he could not hear, glancing round at Olympia and Stella with a face over which there rippled such merriment as startled Stella, from its contrast to his usual melancholy. She seemed suddenly to be able to take the measure of what years of disappointment had done to him. In aunt Portia's eagerness to make herself heard, she let down a little bit of one of the windows, shouting, "I tell you again, I don't know." Louis laid his hand on the top of the glass, forcing it open while he spoke. "Allow us to carry your chair into the yard; the rain that is falling pretty briskly will neutralize your ether." So said, so done. By a curious coincidence, no sooner was the top of the sedan thrown open, than a flash of lightning, followed by a tremendous clap of thunder, produced a general consternation. The fat Diana, Mercury, and Ulysses fled, believing their mistress had blown up, and not the least terrified was aunt Portia herself, who lay in a heap at the bottom of her sedan-chair. Louis, though almost useless from laughter, lifted up the old lady, and carried her back into the house, setting her upright on her feet. The shock had made her forget all about her leg. "There, aunt Portia, your blue devils have ridden off magnificently on a thunderbolt," said Louis; "now make these ladies welcome, who must remain your guests, I perceive, for this night." Aunt Portia was very courteous in her way, but she retained a crestfallen look the whole of that evening.

For a time there was nothing for it but to watch the hurricane. The servants, who had run away in alarm, could not return to the house, for the wind was tearing along between heaven and earth, and whatever it met, it whirled up, tossed down, rolled over, and sent flying, to be again taken up, tossed down, and rolled over. Stella had never witnessed such a struggle in nature. While close at hand, it was so breathless that a feather would not have waved; while yet no sound met her ear, she could trace the terrific approach of the blast, by seeing large trees falling without a struggle, like wheat under the reaper's sickle. The little square house rocked like a ship at sea, and crash after crash announced the fall of two of the gilded turrets, Miss Portia's special pride. Louis stood between Olympia and Stella, holding a hand of each. "Do you think we are safe in this nutshell?" whispered Olympia.

"If it be only the whisk of the tail of a hurricane, and not the beginning of one," he answered.

"You are frightened," he continued. "Do not look out of the window any more;" and he drew Olympia away from where they had been all three standing. "He never remembered me," thought Stella.

At the same moment, a scream from Miss Portia rang the knell of her sedan-chair. Forgotten in the yard, when Louis had lifted out the poor lady, it was knocked and shattered to bits by the storm; piece after piece of its old body careered in mid air, and even while Miss Lowe was yet screaming, a fragment in its mad course came bang through the window where Stella was still standing. It hit her on the wrist, and for a little while she supposed her arm was broken, but she set her teeth, and not a sound did she utter; she did not wish to force Louis to pity her, and he had no time to ask questions, for it was necessary to barricade the aperture the wood had made in its passage into the room. The sacrifice of the venerable sedan-chair had appeased the wrath of the wind gods: the clouds opened, and the rain descended, as it probably fell on the first day of the Deluge. Danger was over, and the fat blacks issued from their hiding-places in full chase after plates and knives and forks, swimming along in the runnels cut by the torrents pouring from the angry heavens. "Oh! those careless devils of blacks," shrieked Miss Portia. "I'll tell you what," rushing into the rain, and brandishing her stick. "I'll have an overseer, and a whip. No, I'll have

a cat-o'-nine-tails ; see if I don't, you grinning monkeys." Certainly poor aunt Portia's reign was not one of terror, but it was one of frightful disorder. Her negroes, so *she* asserted, would one and all go through fire and water for her, but never think it worth their while to give her either her breakfast or dinner twice at the same hour. On this day of events and disasters, any meal at all was scarcely to be expected ; and Louis, knowing the habits of the house, prepared to take his leave, for nothing but the impossibility of his horse swimming the river, he said, should prevent his returning to Silver Hill to tranquillize the Maman. He would listen to none of Olympia's arguments to the contrary. "I should despise myself," he exclaimed, "if I ever willingly neglected my dear mother's comfort : it shall not be for a little more or less water, at any rate." Stella looked at him with surprise : was he then unconscious that he made Mrs. Gautier often believe that she was no longer of any consequence to him ? Stella's heart was glad within her at this proof of Louis's love for the Maman : her eye brightened, and no word to detain him came from her lips. She would rather have him *sans peur et sans reproche*, and break her heart over his danger, than have him safe at her feet, with a duty neglected.

Louis saw her wish in her eager eyes, and he went, but half pleased though. He did not examine his thoughts, but Stella rather lost with him for the time being. "She has too little of the softness of a woman : she ought to have lived in the days of knight-errantry, when ladies were won by peril of body." Thus he mused as he swam his good steed Kaled through the swollen river. And all that evening how painfully alive Stella's senses were to every gust of wind and splash of rain ; how her temples throbbed while Miss Portia kept her a prisoner at backgammon. Aunt Portia's passion was backgammon. All struggle with the world over (probably Miss Lowe had had her romance as well as other people), in her long solitude, she had attached herself to puerilities and dreams. Stella was fairly bewildered by the fire of her adversary's technical eloquence. "Quatre ace ! what a pace, for a woman in a hurry ! Cinque and tré !—haste away ! Tréduce !—traduce me not !" on and on, over and over again, until bed-time. Released from this durance, it was to lie awake and listen to the ominous roaring of Bull Bay, and when sleep overtook her, as it will do the young, it was to dream that Louis was calling to her for help. Surely

it is his voice that wakes her ! Yes, it is morning again, and he is speaking through the window to Olympia, who is in the next room to Stella. Thank God ! he is safe. When they all met at breakfast, Olympia was in the highest spirits ; so entirely engrossing the conversation that it was impossible for any one else to put in a word. She took on herself to answer every one of Louis's questions and remarks. " You should have seen Miss Lowe and Stella last evening, Gautier ; such a pair of gamblers ! I don't think they would have heard another hurricane. I could scarcely hear the noise of the river for their talking and laughing ; " and Olympia looked so artless and lovely—how could any man imagine that she was calculating on the effect of her every word ?

Aunt Portia fell into thought, while Olympia went on giving her own version of the evening before. Presently Miss Lowe exclaimed—" I have been thinking over what you have just said, Madam Olympia, and, do you know, I am not at all of your opinion ? " There was a silence. " Miss Stella neither laughed nor talked. I am a selfish old thing, and took advantage of her good-nature. I'd be sorry Louis Gautier should believe that the young lady was unfeeling through my bad tricks. It wouldn't have been pretty in her, not to care whether her cousin was safe or not. " Stella loved aunt Portia from that moment, and thought her, in spite of her visions and blue devils, a clever old woman ; and, indeed, aunt Portia was by no means a fool. She drew Mr. Gautier aside, as she said, to consult him about another sedan-chair, and then she observed to him—" That young cousin of thine, friend Louis, is neither well nor happy. *L'ame use*—what's it your horrid French says—wears out the body ? To be sure, something must, you know : suppose you find out what ? "

The road to Silver Hill was much cut up ; the river considerably wider and fuller than the day before ; and Stella's bruised arm was so stiff as to make the holding of the bridle really a difficulty to her. Louis had frequently to bid her keep a tighter rein ; once he spoke quite sharply, for Janet had made a dangerous stumble. " That beast is unsafe, " he said : " you shall not ride it again. " This tone of authority over her gladdened Stella's heart. He was not, then, totally indifferent to her.

" Raise your hand, " continued Louis, and he took hold of her wrist to show her his meaning. Involuntarily she winced. " Did I hurt you ? " he asked, surprised.

"The piece of sedan-chair hit me yesterday, cousin Louis."

He pushed up the sleeve of the habit, and saw the discolouration.

"Why did you not tell us that you had been hurt?"

"You were too much occupied to have time to think of me, cousin Louis;" and Stella rode forward.



CHAP. XXXVI.—THERE MUST BE A CHANGE.

ONE of the incidents that broke the routine of Silver Hill, was the arrival of English letters. Celia had never ceased urging Stella to return to England. By the mail with which we have to do, she wrote not only to Stella, but to Mr. Gautier on this subject. Louis's brow wore an angry red spot, as he perused the effusion addressed to him by his first love: probably Celia told him he was acting from selfish motives in detaining Stella, and added many other agreeable remarks; certainly Celia would not spare Louis Gautier. To Stella, pretty Auntie wrote in the most fondling terms her vocabulary afforded; yet there were little stings in the tail of some of the light phrases. There was also a bit of news. "Your old admirer, S. S., is returned from a tour round Europe, looking handsomer than ever, as if he had left off wearing some years of his life. Harriette declares he has been in search of some lost love, and has discovered her happy decease; for he is less mysterious, and talks in favour of marriage. At one time I thought he meant to be Hattie's son-in-law, but I believe he is faithful to you, Stella—more particularly so, since you have become an heiress." Celia did not take any trouble to compose her sentences; the letter went on thus:—"I put you on your guard: forewarned, forearmed. Major Dashwood heard from Mr. Hood that the old beau is moving, not heaven, but the West End—that is, some old first-class cronies—to get him sent to any of the colonies as slave protector, one of the new-fangled appointments created by the anti-slavery party. I suspect our friend of meaning to have two strings to his bow—of speculating in emancipation and in heiresses. He has an eye on Jamaica, though he is too sly to allude to such a possibility before us. Now you know the proverb, 'In the kingdom of the blind the one-eyed is king.' You will think our dear S. S. an Adonis when compared with

such as unfortunately you are condemned alone to see in your wilderness. But you are *not* to marry Mr. Smythe: he is very well to flirt with, but he is too old, too poor, too—what shall I call it?—too good-for-nothing for *you*, or any like you.” Then followed the usual admonitions about Stella’s stay in Jamaica, the usual adjurations and solicitations. Stella uttered an exclamation of surprise when she came to the paragraph relating to the probability of Mr. Smythe’s coming to Jamaica. Louis and Olympia (it was in the evening when they were all assembled in the sitting-room) looked at Stella inquiringly. With a deep blush, that of course Louis misconstrued, she said—“Who do you think is likely to come to Jamaica, cousin Louis? Precisely, your old antipathy, Mr. Stapylton Smythe!”

“Indeed, and does your correspondent mention the why and the wherefore of his coming?”

“Auntie says, he is trying to get some new appointment that is going to be established in Jamaica and the other islands. This is what Auntie writes——.” Then remembering Celia’s remarks and warnings, she blushed again and hesitated.

Louis said no more, but his face wore its darkest shade. A few minutes after, Stella laid her aunt’s letter open before him. He wished to say, “No, I thank you,” but curiosity, perhaps jealousy, conquered his pride, and he perused Celia’s epistle from one end to the other. Olympia meanwhile had returned to her book, showing no further interest. To hide her embarrassment while Louis was reading Auntie’s suppositions and advice, Stella went to the piano.

“Sing, Stella my dear,” said the Maman. “I do not like that noisy dance music.”

“What shall it be, Maman?” asked Stella.

“Any one of your little songs.”

Though far from rivalling that of Olympia in power or flexibility, Stella’s voice was not to be despised: it belonged to that class the Italians define as “voce simpatica.” Association of ideas brought to Stella’s mind Mr. Smythe’s Romaic song; she began it with the Romaic words, stopped, and said, “I must sing it in Italian.” Her voice shook with emotion at the idea of singing before Louis.

“Nei giorni tuoi felici, ricordati di me,
Se a me fedel tu sei, fedel a te sarò.”

She went through it, and when she had sung the last note, it seemed to her she had never known so dead a silence. She

turned round; surely it was her fancy: Olympia's eyes were fixed on her with an expression of hatred and horror quite alarming. Stella went to the Maman's side, but she could not help watching Olympia. She saw that though sitting so immovable, her hands, which hung down from the arms of the chair, were trembling; never did tongue express more intense agitation than those silent, quivering fingers. In a little, Olympia passed a hand over her eyes, exclaimed that the room was overpoweringly hot, and walked into the piazza. In every-day society, men and women put a muzzle on their feelings. They do not faint, they do not threaten with loud bullying words: they love, they hate, they are murderers in thought, they offer themselves up as sacrifices; but the drama is played out in their hearts in silence, and the wicked, as well as the divine impulse, is known only to God. Of all persons who hold an habitual guard over themselves, none do so more stringently than those who have disagreeable antecedents. Some experienced person has likened a cautious manner, a sedulous emission of great sentiments, an unusual dose of prudery, to conspirators' passports, in which no irregularities are to be found.

Whatever the cause of Olympia's menacing look at Stella, she gave it no utterance. She remained in the piazza to meditate, but she could put no order in her thoughts for one besieging desire. If it were only possible to get rid of Stella; if she could be induced to leave Silver Hill at once. Various designs ran riot in the troubled woman's brains; it was well that they went no further than conception. Of every criminal of whom we hear, let us go down on our knees, and thank God, not as the Pharisee, but in the spirit of the publican, let us thank God humbly, that by His grace we have been saved from committing a crime: tempted in like wise, we had perhaps in like wise fallen. We see and testify to the evil done; we know nothing of the evil resisted. Let us turn our glance inwards each time we would cast the stone, and we shall lay it aside for prayer and thanksgiving. Louis had not seen Olympia's repressed emotion: he had not looked off the letter in his hand. Stella could not have told whether Mrs. Gautier had or had not noticed Olympia at that instant, for her eyes were closed when Stella took refuge by her side. "I agree with Mrs. Dashwood in some of her remarks," said Louis, giving back the letter to Stella.

"In which, cousin Louis?"

"She is right in saying you are too much cut off from the society of your equals."

"Do you mean that as a compliment or not, cousin Louis?"

"I mean it," he returned, "exactly as your aunt Dashwood means it; that living here at Silver Hill, you are debarred from forming those intimacies which might lead to your being happily married."

"Have I ever given you any cause to suppose that I was wishing to be married?" flashed out Stella, with considerable hauteur.

Stella was in the low chair by Mrs. Gautier's side. The Maman laid her hand on the girl's head, saying, "She is but twenty yet, Louis. So there's time enough: do not take her from me yet."

"God forbid that I should put any constraint on her feelings," replied Louis, his serious eyes fixed on Stella, but she kept her face hid on the Maman's knee. He approached her. "You must not be angry with me, Stella," he said, "for playing the part of a sober guardian. What I say, I say for conscience sake; and you ought to make some account of my bearing the insinuations of selfishness which are made against me, for having yielded to your wish of remaining in Jamaica. Come, give me your hand as a sign of peace."

She held it out to him; and as he clasped it firmly, he was astonished to feel it so cold and clammy. During this little scene Olympia was looking in at the door. Rather embarrassed by his own position, standing before a young lady who would not look at him, Louis joined Olympia, and together they went into the piazza. Stella raised her head, listened to their retreating steps, then looking at Mrs. Gautier, broke forth with, "Oh, Maman! I love you, how I love you; as long as I have you, I shall never be quite miserable. Keep me with you, don't let any one send me away."

"Send you away!" said the Maman. "Why should we desire to part with our rosebud?" Decidedly the Maman had not seen Olympia's glaring eyes.

Olympia led Louis from the piazza to the terrace before the house. Stars spangled the dark blue of heaven; fireflies spangled the dark earth; but neither gentle light let Louis see the dire paleness of his companion. They walked side by side for some time without speaking; then Olympia broke the thread of Mr. Gautier's thoughts by asking him point-

blank what had been in Mrs. Dashwood's letter. He told her very exactly. "What a change a girl brings into a house," observed Olympia.

"Yes, she brings a whole unread poem with her," answered Louis.

"A poem eternally the same," said Olympia. "Ignorance and its bliss at the beginning; then the passions and pomps and vanity of the world; a handsome or an ugly hero, for all depends on opportunity; a girl must fall in love, and it will be with the first comer; short-lived smiles and hopes; Psyche takes the lamp, discovers Cupid to be a monster or an idiot—threats, quarrels, duplicities, and the poem ends." Bitter as the words were, the tone in which they were uttered made them still more so. Louis could not help being startled, and said—

"You are very severe, Olympia, on girls, and too much so, certainly, on Stella."

"It might seem so to people in general, but I did not expect you to think so. I speak from sad experience. I look on a girl with pity rather than severity, and if Stella were my daughter, I would myself choose a husband for her, a practical professional man—one for whom she might have a friendly feeling, but not love. I should insist on such a marriage. The husband and wife would be little together, so would not be tempted to hate one another. She would have her children to occupy her time and heart; and would go through life tranquilly and safely—without great joy perhaps, but without suffering."

After a short silence Louis said, "You speak at your ease, my dear friend, but have you a right to require a young creature to accept of your choice, and resign her birthright of love for a mess of pottage of content? You yourself, how would you have agreed to such a fate at twenty years of age?"

"It is because I was so mad myself, so headstrong, that I would preserve my sister's daughter. Our blood runs too swiftly in our veins; we need modifying by more lethargic natures: send Stella back to her English friends, and you will save her."

"I cannot propose her going. I have done so more than once, and I have promised not to moot the question again."

"Then," said Olympia, with violence, "it is all over with our comfort: it was a cruel fate that brought her here."

Louis did not allow himself to answer immediately; he

took a turn up the terrace first, then on his way back said, in a dry staccato voice, "Yes, it has been a fate. It is true that 'there is a divinity shapes our ends, rough hew them as we may.' Oh! my dear friend"—An avowal trembled on his lips; a word, one friendly word from Olympia, and he would have made her his confidant. He waited for this sympathizing word, and instead heard constrained weeping. He felt cruelly disappointed and irritated, and said, vehemently, "But what would you have me do? I cannot turn the girl out of the house."

"No," returned Olympia, "but I can go. I never deceived myself; I knew a day would come when I should have to leave Silver Hill. I must seek a lasting refuge in some convent in Cuba."

"Upon my word," said Louis, "you astonish me. I cannot discover any sufficient reason for such a rash resolution. What is there to-day that was not yesterday? In what have I or any of us sinned? Is it impossible for you to exist in the same house with your niece?"

"Yes, it is."

There was no mistaking the feeling that prompted this decision: the truth burst upon Mr. Gautier at once. Had a blaze of the electric fluid from the heaven above suddenly enveloped him from head to foot, Louis could not have experienced a greater commotion than these three words produced on him. Even his faculty of speaking was suspended. Olympia waited awhile as if she expected an answer; then said, in her usual gentle way, "Do not let us speak any more on the subject just now. I cannot help a sort of nervous dread of changes. I have suffered so much, that the only happiness I can understand is an unvarying routine—one day the type of the next. I did not mean to speak unkindly of Stella, or to vex you, Louis." It was very seldom that Olympia called him by his Christian name; it sounded almost as strange to him, in its softness, as her unusual violence had done. It piques a woman horribly, when she has given way to any little sentimentality, to have it left on her hands. Olympia added in a sharper tone, "We must accept our friends with their faults," slipped her arm from his, and went quickly into the house. In the solitude of the night, Louis Gautier examined his present situation—that situation which Olympia's few words had laid bare to him. He must and would extricate himself from the false position into which his

imprudence, or rather want of foresight, had placed him. But how? Probably had Mr. Gautier been a man of business in England, or a soldier, or a sailor—in short, in any calling of life where a man's mind rubs against other men's minds, and thus is kept bright and clear, he might not have been so perplexed as he was on the present occasion. Everybody has had the experience of how different our judgments are of the same thing in different atmospheres, or even in a room out of doors. Many a morbid cobweb has been swept from a brain by a brisk breeze and a sunshiny day. Louis Gautier had none of these healthy helps to a clear comprehension of his difficulty; he was in an enervating climate, and pretty nearly "monarch of all he surveyed." He did as we are all apt to do; began his consideration of the present, by recalling the past—recriminating the past. He perceived that in the first numbness of disappointment he had strayed into a labyrinth, out of which he now was aware it would not be easy to find his way, without wounding himself and others to death. This is just the worst part of false positions: few are good enough generals always to avoid a blunder, and then follows either a murderous retreat or an ignominious surrender. The more Louis thought of it, the less clearly he could define his position; and, worse and worse, the less courage he had to face it. "There must be a change—we cannot continue thus," he repeated over and over again, with a consciousness that it was a case for cutting his way out with a sword, and a perfect consciousness also that he shrunk from the only remedy.

It is a rare and an inexpressible blessing to be able to walk straight to an end, if it be to the cannon's mouth, without looking to the right or the left—to be able to measure accurately where duty ceases, and *sensiblerie* begins. Louis had plenty of head and nerve, but he had too much sensitiveness—a fault of temperament unconquered, perhaps unconquerable. He evaded the decision that would have been most merciful to every one concerned: he temporised as most of us do when in a difficulty of some delicate nature. He had a real affection for Olympia: had she been a single woman, very likely, in spite of the difference of age, it might have taken a different turn from that which it had done. He had long believed that this friendship was sufficient for him: he called it love without passion. They had both been very enthusiastic at first—had promised to each other never to have or withhold any secret, never to separate. And now, behold, even at this

friend's side, without the aid of absence, a young un-formed girl had plunged Louis into all his old dreams—had poised his spirit again on the wings of hope. "Are friendship and love impossible under the same roof?" asked Louis, with the same despair probably with which many other Louises have inquired. Did he not now confess that it would be something as difficult to find as the four-leaved shamrock? It must be allowed that the first resolution which presented itself to Gautier was flight; but he very soon recognized that as impossible. One point alone he was certain of: let what would be the consequence to himself, Olympia should not be sent out, to brave the hard-judging world. Could he endow her with the fortune of Cresus, he should despise himself if he harboured the idea it could make amends to her for the loss of home and friend. He thus reduced himself to one possibility, if change there must be. Stella, the young, beautiful heiress, should go. He would base his plea on reasons drawn from Mrs. Dashwood's letter: she must never suspect the true cause. Louis could see what a terrible award threatened him and Olympia—should Stella penetrate his motives he could never hope to clear either the one or the other in his cousin's opinion. How could he say, "I am not my own master," and ask her to believe that the chain binding him was not a vicious one? Did he acknowledge to himself that Stella's happiness might be in jeopardy? Not yet. He thanked God very fervently, as many Louises have done before him, that he had never said one word that could lead her to guess his feelings towards her; he was, reluctantly, but decidedly, trying to cheat himself. Conscience here gave him so smart a prick, that he pleaded, "Yes, I know her ingenuous trust in me might easily be raised to love, but I *have* preserved her against myself. I will do so: every feeling of honour obliges me to do so."

Human nature is full of the strangest contradictions, and not the least puzzling among them are the prejudices and scruples as to "points of honour." Sources alike of the noblest actions, and of the most egregious mistakes and follies, how many martyrs can they not boast! What oceans of tears! what unknown Calvarys! Louis Gautier was four-and-thirty, and not twenty-four. So he did not rave, or call on the high heavens to compassionate him, but he passed a sleepless night, thinking sadly, what rash bills of exchange youth draws on the future.

Not the less decided, however, was he in his resolutions

when he arose in the morning : he was even in a hurry to assure Olympia, that he held good the promise given, and that not only to the letter, but in the spirit. In pursuance of this decision, he said to her, "You must help me in the present circumstances, as you have done in many others during these last ten years—years never to be forgotten by me. Your peace, and that of our common home, are sacred to your grateful friend." Louis's tone was calm and firm ; he had intended it to be kind. Olympia was impressed, and asked, almost submissively, "What do you wish me to?" "Merely to have patience with Stella's presence at Silver Hill for a few months longer, till she is of age. Perhaps before that, she may wish to go to England ; and if not, I shall find some respectable lady to act as her chaperone at Cedar Valley. We shall then resume our former existence here, and forget there has been any interruption."

Olympia listened in silence and inward dismay. Was it possible that the unguarded word which had betrayed her real feelings had hardened instead of softened him. Probably ; coming as it did in the shape of a barrier between him and his happiness. It is false to imagine that the discovery of a woman's love for a man must of necessity touch, must invariably flatter him. *C'est selon*, as a Frenchman would say. A strong-minded, good man submits where duty and justice require it of him, or where he fancies they do : but claims in cases of the affections are sad mistakes, resulting in making every one concerned *too often* miserable, and most certainly *always* uncomfortable and disagreeable. Gautier felt towards Olympia in this emergency much as that knight of old did to the lady who required him to fetch her glove from the lion's den. His idea of knightly honour did not permit him to refuse to give this proof of devotion, but the fair dame lost her devoted servant. For, self-sacrifice, to be a manifestation of love, must be voluntary, not coerced.



CHAP. XXXVII.—SHADOWS THROWN BEFORE.

THE peace and contentment within the walls of Silver Hill had run its allotted time ; nowhere on earth can perfection and permanence be hoped for. Passions, great or small, are the sure destroyers of even the most rational circle of friends. Nevertheless it was impossible to be more graciously kind to Stella, more

gently cheerful with every one, than was Olympia. Perhaps, with her clear head, she discerned the signs, forerunners of an inevitable change; perhaps she regretted having made the first breach; at all events, she was evidently desirous of putting off the evil day. Far more than by her passion was Mr. Gautier touched by the efforts she made to be agreeable to Stella; and he wondered at, and disapproved of the young lady's passiveness under all Olympia's attentions. One day he even remarked to the latter—"I will not have you so observant of Stella; I do not like to see you so submissive: there is something unnatural in it. Your two natures do not assimilate: it is a misfortune which we must bear with dignity, as we do other irreparable misfortunes." At that time it dawned upon Stella that in the same capricious manner Louis but a short while since was always coming and going, so now his absences were strangely prolonged. He looked ill, haggard, like a man who passed his nights without sleep, and his days in anxiety. At first Stella feared that his affairs were going wrong; she knew he had had great difficulty in keeping himself free of debt. But this could not be the case, for Olympia was in her usual spirits, though she was more in the counting-house than she had ever been since Stella came to Silver Hall. A suspicion grew very soon into certainty, that her cousin wished to avoid her. Stella was angry once more, then vexed, though she did her best to maintain her equable manner. The cousins studied one another very closely; for Louis's face often twitched after one of Stella's polite speeches, in which no other ear but his would have perceived any dryness, and Stella saw the look of pain she dreaded become fixed on his features.

Other sources of disquiet, besides domestic ones, were at hand. Rumours reached even the recluses of Silver Hill, of a growing licence among the blacks in the towns. One of the stories of the day was, that a list had been discovered in which certain ladies' names figured as the intended brides of the ringleaders of a *soi-disant* conspiracy. It was also said that young ladies had been addressed by negroes in terms which made their escort, military men, use their riding-whips. Such matters were, unfortunately, too often discussed at dinner-tables, with the utmost plainness, before half-a-dozen strapping blacks, as if they had been only "the goods and chattels" the law held them to be. The management of properties daily became more difficult; and to meet

the exigencies of the moment, planters and overseers banded themselves together, and enacted private laws of great rigour for their own guidance. Certain that this was no time for increase of severity, certain that the moment of emancipation was at hand, and that the only hope of safety lay in allowing it to arrive without a shock, Louis refused to take any share in the regulations of the self-elected legislators. He was consequently looked upon by some as a renegade to the general weal—as a favourer of missionaries; by others, as a man likely to fall between two stools.

Stella gloried in his resistance to the tyranny of the majority, and could not prevent symptoms of her satisfaction reaching Mr. Gautier; and a very flushed cheek and brightened eye he wore that day. It would not be easy for an every-day pen, like the one writing these words, to do justice to the immense amount of evil occasioned by popular ignorance. The conduct of the Jamaica people at this period was just what the conduct of all despotisms becomes. Certain consequences inevitably follow certain acts. Thus in the moment ripe for its downfall, we may, with undoubting faith, look for extraordinary blind credulity, a reckless obedience to the impulse of self-interest, which no experience, no bygone facts, has ever been known to affect. Christmas was at hand again—another year had been added to the age of the universe. Was the planet we call the world any nearer the realization of goodwill to men and to peace on earth? Let us see. The old nations of Europe were vibrating under the struggle for liberty. Merry England was not merry at all, with the Reform Bill and the Corn Laws to settle. France, the initiator, had once again unfurled her tricoloured banner of liberty, equality, fraternity. Italy had shaken herself in her lair, and the rattle of her chains had sent a quake from head to foot of every one on whose head weighed a crown. The reverberation of the emotions of Europe ran the round of the globe. Gold and blood were plentifully spent, a fierce cloud gathered, and hung heavy and threatening over the West Indies; when it burst, would it purify, or utterly destroy? Some, regarding it with terror, fled; some shook their fists at it in menace; others raised a cry of derision. What! the inferior race subdue the superior!—the hare conquer the lion! Some there were who never looked at aught but the gay parterres among which they walked, like the child playing with the flowers concealing the precipice.

One morning in early December, as Stella was standing on the terrace looking out at the beautiful sight of the coffee plantation, contrasting it in thought with the snowy scenes of England in that month, she heard the sound of many voices, and saw something glittering appear and disappear on the zigzag road leading up the hill to the house. There was no doubt what that cackling sound portended: it was the flourish of music that announced the arrival of aunt Portia; and in a minute or two a brand new sedan, painted in blue, white, and red, and with gilded cornices, appeared rocking along the terrace. Aunt Portia's political bias may be guessed from the colours she sported. She was a little late in this open display of her partisanship, but it had been a mere question of time: her sympathies were peculiarly marked when she had the power of showing them. Aunt Portia, had she lived till now, would have painted her sedan red, and nothing but red. Though seventy, dear old lady, she had the greatest faith in the perfectibility of human beings. Every revolution, upon whatever account, was acceptable to her as a sign of progress. Many a quarrel had she had on politics with her favourite, Louis Gautier; and it could only have been her horror of the sight of blood, which had prevented her being the Joan of Arc of the blacks. Aunt Portia was a republican, communist, socialist, to the backbone; and what was really strange, she lived up to her principles. The sedan was set down in the piazza, and the lady within it scarcely noticed Stella's greeting, so eager was she to know where Mr. Gautier was; she must see him directly. "I have nothing to say to you, good people:" this to the three ladies now assembled round the sedan: "I must have a man's opinion. The masculine gender has the precedence with me, and I am free to acknowledge it."

"Whatever your news, Miss Portia, I am sure it is good news," said Mrs. Gautier; "I have not seen you looking so well for years."

"Well, now, Mrs. Gautier, I'll ask your opinion as a woman of sense and experience. At what age do you think a female may escape the calumny of the world?"

"I am afraid it would be a matter of offence to our sex to suppose they could escape that at *any* age," returned the Maman, with a quiet little laugh.

"Very cleverly answered," observed aunt Portia. "Now then, at what age can a woman make sure of not feeling the *belle passion*? I make it an open question. You all laugh. Miss

Stella would give Madam Olympia's and Madam Olympia would give mine: it's all comparative. I begin to think it not impossible at any age."

"You are very enigmatical to-day, aunt Portia," exclaimed Stella. "Do tell us what has happened, or is going to happen."

"There's a gentleman in the case," replied aunt Portia; "and I am sorely tempted to accept his offer, my dear friends. Lately I have begun to feel the inconvenience of being a lone woman."

"Oh! my good Miss Lowe!" pronounced Mrs. Gautier, in a tone of warning.

"It's just being Miss Lowe, ma'am, makes the mischief," cried the spinster. "I can tell you, if you were here by yourself, and hearing whispers all night round your house, turn which way you would in your bed, and drag the counterpane over your head, and still whisper, whisper, whisper; if you saw great black eyes staring out of every coffee-bush, you would be very glad, I suspect, to accept a polite, handsome gentleman's offer to come and reside with you, and feel mightily inclined to say, 'Sir, hang up your hat on the first peg in the hall, and make yourself quite at home.'"

Olympia shrunk back as she heard the words, "polite, handsome gentleman."

"Who comes in such questionable guise?" asked Louis, as he came in, and saw the parti-coloured sedan.

"Just the person wanted," exclaimed aunt Portia, throwing up the top of the sedan. "Louis Gautier, were you acquainted in England with a Mr. Stapylton Smythe?"

"Yes; that is, I met a gentleman of that name at Major Dashwood's house and elsewhere."

"And what did you think of him?"

"I did not come to any particular conclusion on the subject of Mr. Smythe? What have you to do with him, aunt Portia?"

"He is not the man to commit murder, eh?"

"Not more likely to do so than any other person of my acquaintance."

"And your opinion, Miss Stella?"

"I don't like Mr. Smythe much, aunt Portia."

"He doesn't return the compliment; for he talks of you as if you were a heathen goddess."

"Once more, aunt Portia, where have you seen Mr. Smythe?" asked Mr. Gautier.

"At my own house, my dear lad; you see, Mr. Boyick

brought him to me : he is sent out by H. M. as a slave protector."

"Oh, indeed ! that is something quite new."

"Quite !" replies Miss Portia. "And besides that, my beau is come to make a revolution among us, he'll be a general benefactor, Mr. Louis. He has got the charge of Valmarosa estate as planting attorney, and he is going to plant vines there ; and we shall soon be done with all your rubbish of coffee and sugar."

"But why are you so interested about his character ?"

"Ah ! that's the very thing brought me here. You know the great house at Valmarosa is in a pretty pickle—scarcely two shingles on the roof : till it is put to rights, Boyick proposed my letting this gentleman a part of my house. Says I to them both—'You can go away for the present, and I'll think it over ;' which meant, I'll get something out of that close chap, Louis Gautier, about this fine gentleman : for he is a fine gentleman—courteous as an heir apparent, and handsome, too, though he is not so young as he has been."

"You can get nothing out of Louis Gautier," replied Louis ; "for I do not know anything for or against Mr. Smythe."

"Well, then, I think I'll take him on trial," was aunt Portia's summing up ; "he'll be company at dinner : it won't be more than a nine days' scandal at most. Why don't you like Mr. Smythe, Miss Stella ?"

"I neither like nor dislike him, aunt Portia."

"Young ladies don't always speak the truth. I remember I used to say certain persons were ugly, whom I thought the handsomest in the world. Call my people, Louis. I am off : my beau is to call again to-day on his way here. Miss Stella, you have a fine colour. Bye, bye,—all of you !" waving her thin bony hand ; and aunt Portia sunk out of sight, drawing down the top of the sedan after her.

A short while after Miss Lowe's departure, Olympia said, "Will you come out with me, Stella ? There's plenty of shade in the mango grove." The two ladies walked almost in silence till they reached a sort of natural avenue. Then Olympia said, "I want you to tell me more about this new neighbour to be."

"My aunt Dashwood said he was a very clever man ; he sings very well, and he has a manner of talking to people as if he cared very much about them, while in reality he does not," was Stella's reply.

"That is to say," observed Olympia, "he admired you very much."

"I cannot tell indeed, for he used to put on the same look when he spoke to Mrs. Hood, or Auntie, or Emily Hubbard—worse with her than any one."

"Do you know, Stella, that I think that his real motive for coming to Jamaica is to look after you."

"Then he will very soon go away again," said Stella, quietly; "but I do not believe Mr. Smythe cared for me."

"What gave you that impression, my dear?"

"Perhaps I did fancy he liked me rather at one time. Auntie and Major Dashwood had some idea of the kind, I know; but I found out he did not, for Mrs. Hubbard asked him one day before me why he did not marry, and have some one to nurse him, for he was often ill—he had broken a blood-vessel, I believe: he laughed, and said he was not a marrying man—that he would not marry for money, and that he was too poor to marry without. Besides, I am sure he did not care for me," wound up Stella, with emphasis; "for he always made way for other gentlemen to come and talk to me, and was always joking me about my being married."

"But he knows now that you are rich," said Olympia: "he has come to Jamaica with some other aim than the one he gives out, depend on it."

"He cannot force me to marry him against my will; so I am not a bit afraid of him."

Olympia, after a moment's thought, said, "I do not often intrude my opinions on you; but as your nearest relative here, perhaps it is my duty to advise you to be prudent with this gentleman—to begin as you intend to end, I mean: by showing a marked avoidance of him. He seems by your description to be a male coquet, and you may get yourself entangled before you know where you are."

Stella slightly laughed. "You had better see him first before you decree his banishment. Who knows? you may like him very much, though I do not."

"It is an odd way of showing your dislike, to encourage his visits."

"I have no wish to encourage his visits, but, at the same time, I don't intend to be rude, and I shall not object to hearing some news of my friends in England. Mr. Smythe never gave me any reason for wishing particularly to avoid him."

"You are not insensible, I see, to the pleasure of being admired: many girls—most girls, I may say—think it a feather in their cap to have had several offers; they overlook the fact that it stamps them as common flirts."

"You judge me very severely, Olympia," said Stella. "It will be time enough to call me a flirt when you have proofs to give."

"Then you are resolved to shelter yourself under a false plea of ignorance and blindness to his intentions, to attract Mr. Smythe here."

"I shall neither try to attract nor repel," said Stella, now much offended.

"You mean to make use of one man to bring another forward?" burst out Olympia.

"I do not understand you," said Stella, coldly.

"You *do* understand me, and I understand *you* perfectly," retorted Olympia, with a look of scorn.

"I repeat that I do not understand your insinuation," said Stella, moving away.

"You shall not go," and Olympia seized the girl's arm; "you are a very cautious young lady—*very*," she went on bitterly. "You must have dots on every 'i,' and crosses on every 't,' before you can venture to comprehend a gentleman's intentions: there's nothing on earth so false as your prudes."

"I shall be obliged if you will set my arm free," said Stella.

"No; you shall not go to complain of me to Gautier. I will give you the explanation you require. If you do not keep Mr. Smythe away, there will be blood on your head: those two men will fight; and that woman is a despicable wretch who risks men's lives to feed her vanity. Why don't you answer me, and not look as if you thought me mad? You know as well as I do that Louis Gautier loves you!"

"Louis loves me!" exclaimed Stella, extricating her arm. "If I had ever believed so, I should disbelieve it now, hearing it from your lips. No, no. I am young and inexperienced, but not silly enough to put faith in words like those from you. What! You who, ever since I saw you, have done everything you could to separate me from Louis—who have used artifice upon artifice to make him think meanly of me—who have forced me to appear in the worst light before him—you come now and expect me to believe that it is because Louis

loves me, that it is for *that* you want me to keep away Mr. Smythe? That is not the reason. I do not guess what it is, I may never know, but——”

“Have pity on me, Stella!” cried Olympia, flinging her arms round Stella. “There *is* another reason. I have told you the truth, but not the whole truth. Stella, keep that man away! I cannot tell you why, but may I die this moment if I am deceiving you. Oh, heavens! there’s Gautier’s whistle. Stella, Stella, have mercy! Don’t tell him what I have asked!”

“You are safe with me,” said Stella. “God forgive you if this be a trick or an artifice to injure me: it will be on your head.”

“I have your promise to keep what I have said secret,” persisted Olympia.

Stella bowed. “But if you wear such a face as you do now, Gautier will see that there has been some disagreement between us.”

“I am not a good comedian,” returned Stella, “but I am in good faith with you.” The angry retort on Olympia’s lips was arrested by Louis being now within hearing. Stella could see Olympia’s face clear, but she felt her own countenance had not thrown off its disturbance, by the sudden change in the expression of her cousin’s eyes. Louis had reached them smiling—he had been evidently amused, and had come with the intention of imparting his amusement. The marbled complexion of Stella’s cheeks, denoting that agitation had troubled the even course of her blood, struck him instantly. Olympia watched him; his countenance lowered in sympathy with that of Stella. Instead of the lively speech he had intended to make, Louis gravely announced that Mr. Smythe was at the house, and hoped to see Miss Joddrell. Stella at once bent her steps homeward. “I shall leave you a free tête-à-tête to-day, Stella,” said Olympia. “I shall wait for another time to make the gentleman’s acquaintance.” Stella walked away in silence. She never turned her head by way of inviting Louis to accompany her.

CHAP. XXXVIII.—UNDER A SPELL.

OPPOSITION is the first impulse of mankind. Mr. Smythe, twenty-four hours before, would have been an object of indifference to Stella: she would have rather that he would have avoided Silver Hill than otherwise. Now that he was invested with a mystery, he had become an object of curiosity and interest to her. Mr. Smythe met Stella with an air of great pleasure—even made a little display of emotion, but quite within bounds; talked pleasantly of their mutual friends in England; told her that there were rumours of Miss Emily Hubbard's marriage to a high dignitary of the Church of England; said that Miss Philadelphia Dashwood had made him undergo a course of missionary tracts; lamented the unsettled state of Jamaica; believed that there were exaggerations on both sides of the Atlantic—good people to be found everywhere. Could anything be more patriarchial than Miss Lowe's establishment?

"Ah!" replied Stella; "but aunt Portia's management of slaves is a very exceptional case."

"Still an Emancipationist, Miss Joddrell?"

"More than ever, now that I have with mine own eyes seen what slavery is."

"You are aware that I came hither in the capacity of slave protector? I meet with great opposition; indeed, the people here refuse to acknowledge the existence of such an office."

"Then you will not remain here long, I suppose?"

"On the contrary, the island will be compelled to yield; and besides, I am about to try an experiment at Valmarosa, whether Jamaica may not be made available as a wine-growing country. With vineyards instead of sugar and coffee, you might easily dispense with slave labour. May I hope for the patronage of Cedar Valley?"

"I will not make rash promises," said Stella, wishing, with all her heart, Mr. Smythe would go. They were seated in the piazza, and she remarked how at every slight noise he turned his head as if on the look-out for some one.

Olympia's entreaty had put Stella's imagination on the alert, and even while speaking, she was trying to work out some probable reason for her impassioned appeal. The conversation, therefore, so languished that at last the visitor rose

to take his leave. "Where is your horse?" asked Stella, with alacrity.

"I left him with a servant at the foot of the hill. The road up here is rather a trial to the nerves of an English racer. Upon my word, this residence is like a little fort. You might hold out some time against an attack, if you had only a couple of those small brass cannon I saw at Custos Boyick's place."

"But as we have no cannon," replied Stella, "I hope we may never be attacked."

"I hope not. Nevertheless the temper of the negroes is alarming, Miss Joddrell. I shall do my best as a pacificator, you may be sure of that; at all events, remember, in any case of danger or difficulty, I am entirely at your service. I shall only be too happy to show the gratitude I feel for the Dashwoods' kindness to me." Stella could not find a word to say. "May I hope that your friends here will not forget that we are near neighbours? I enjoy Miss Lowe's racy society amazingly; but a little variety will be very acceptable."

"The Maman—I mean, my aunt, Mrs. Gautier, is infirm and delicate," replied Stella; "and we therefore lead a very retired life."

"I shall be contented with very little. I had hoped, considering the circumstances, that we might have resumed in a degree the pleasant intercourse we had at Waterloo Cottage—our readings, our duets. I am not to be quite banished from Silver Hill, I trust?"

Stella was silent: she had none of the tact necessary for such occasions. With an awkward sincerity that made Mr. Smythe smile, she replied—"I really do not know what to say. I will ask Mrs. Gautier;" and she held out her hand with—"I must wish you good-bye now."

"Sans adieu," was the gentleman's reply.

That evening there came a note of three lines from Mr. Smythe to Stella, with a large parcel of books. Every one has had years in their lives when all that surrounds them preserves a certain immobility; when the vicissitudes of fortune, and the attacks of death, avoid their circle. Then a time comes when they have to struggle in a perfect whirlpool of events.

For ten years the Gautiers had lived so quietly, so unembarrassed by changes, that Olympia, the one who had most

to fear from mutations, had begun to do more than hope—she had begun to expect to enjoy peace for the rest of her life. The first break in this even course had been Louis's visit to England; and from that moment she had felt threatened. Stella had been quite right in supposing that Mr. Smythe's eyes were wandering in quest of some one. Aunt Portia had been easily led to gossip about the family at Silver Hill, and Mr. Smythe had thus heard of a Mrs. Olympia, who was neither the wife nor the sister of Louis Gautier. There was some family tie, but aunt Portia did not know what it was. The Gautiers were reserved people, never speaking about themselves; and when Miss Lowe had come to live near them, she had found Mrs. Olympia there. Yes, she was sure about the relationship. She had heard Stella's father drop some hints, that poor relations stuck like burrs, when Mrs. Olympia had been mentioned. "Was the lady young and handsome?"

"People's tastes differ," said aunt Portia, "but there's a sort of likeness in Miss Joddrell to her." Mr. Smythe's fancy ran as much riot now as it had done in his youth: he was always attracted by the vague; his nature was speculative; so when he was at Silver Hill, he was thinking more of the unknown Olympia than of Stella. Mr. Smythe had not changed from what he had been twenty years previously. It suited him to visit at Silver Hill, and he was resolved not to be repulsed by any coldness or hints: he would allow of time for Mr. Gautier to return his visit, and then take his own way.

A few days after Louis did call on Mr. Smythe, and returned from the visit seriously disquieted. Mr. Smythe had heard from Boyick (Mr. Joddrell's successor in the office of Custos), that various overseers had reported to him of unlawful assemblies being nightly held on the properties under their charge. Some of these overseers had ventured in disguise to these meetings, and they declared that the speeches made there were all calculated to inflame the passions of the blacks. They were told of the sympathy of the people of England in most exaggerated terms, and that Mr. Smythe and many others had brought to Jamaica sums of money for their manumission and support; and that after Christmas they would see the truth of these assertions. It had become evident to all men of any reflection, that the time for conciliation was past; the difficulty was to avoid collision; all that could

be hoped now was that, by a display of force, disorder might be kept down. Mr. Gautier did not repeat what he had thus heard to any of his family: he only mentioned, that it had been thought expedient to call out the militia before Christmas. Of all his annoyances as a planter, this of the militia was the severest to Louis. He detested above all, the vulgar excesses which appear an obligatory accompaniment of the meeting to eat and drink after the fatigues of the day. Nevertheless, having chosen his place in the world, common sense told him he must comply with its exigencies. Inexperience and disappointed passion had precipitated him into a position most repugnant to his nature, and out of it he had never been able to extricate himself. Most reluctantly, the day after his visit to Mr. Smythe, Louis dressed himself in his uniform, and thus metamorphosed appeared at breakfast. To say the truth, Louis, a handsome man in any dress, did look peculiarly well in the blue and silver of his regiment; and Stella, girl-like, expressed her preference for that dress over that of the white jacket and broad-brimmed Panama hat, her cousin's usual attire. Louis shrugged his shoulders, saying, "The white jacket is the comfortable garb of freedom, fair lady—this is a badge of servitude; and in proof of my words, I must eat my breakfast without thinking of any one but myself, if I mean to escape a reprimand and a fine."

By some accident, there was no one in the room but the cousins; and Stella, forgetful of their late estrangement, was excessively busy, almost merrily supplying his plate, and filling his cup. "Basta!" he cried, "I am not Captain Dalgetty providing for the future. By-the-by, Stella, what books were those Mr. Smythe sent you?" as he glanced at some richly bound volumes on a table near him. "Show them to Olympia before you read them."

"Cousin Louis, you forget I am four years older than when you first knew me: I was twenty, three weeks ago."

"Why did you not tell me at the time?"

"It was not an object of interest to any one but myself."

"How do you know? It was an uncharitable thought, Stella," said Louis, in a voice from which he had not banished all tenderness. "Never have such again, will you promise me?" She did not venture to speak, but she looked at him, with her beautiful eyes full of tears, and held out her hand to him across the table. Poor young thing! there was not the shadow of any pretence to disguise her feelings. Louis took

the pretty hand between both his :—" Dear little cousin ——" he began, but suddenly his countenance changed : Mrs. Gautier and Olympia were just coming in. Louis dropped Stella's hand quickly, walked to the piazza door, and whistled for his horse. Returning, he hastily embraced the Maman, ran down the steps, giving a military salute to the two younger ladies. None of three women left their position as long as they could see the top of the feather in his cap, waving in the morning breeze. All that morning, Stella sat by the Maman's side, pensive but not sad. She was still under the spell of Louis's gentle words and tones. They were like some newly gained treasure, so long had she been weaned from any such. If he did not care for her, he would not speak to and look at her in that way. Olympia it was who threw her shade over them both. How his face had altered when he had heard Olympia's step ; and then Stella's heart sank for a moment, but only for a moment. The honey she had gathered that morning soon smothered the drop of gall, and she became pensive again, but still hopeful.

Olympia was occupied with some of her elaborate embroidery, labouring at it mechanically, trying to imagine some way of extricating herself from the net she had unconsciously spread for herself. " Caught ! caught ! I will interfere no more with Stella : fate fights for her. What if I confess all to Gautier ? " The three women might have sat as models of Resignation, Hope, and Fear.



CHAP. XXXIX.—ON THE BRINK OF A PRECIPICE.

AND what was Louis Gautier thinking as he rode on his solitary way ? He was fighting with the same thoughts that had banished sleep from his weary eyes for many long nights. He was aware at last, that the *statu quo* he had counted on as possible for several months could not and would not continue. He was a man, and not an angel. The veil with which he had perhaps half-wittingly enveloped his situation was forcibly lifted away that morning. He was as sure now of Stella's growing love for himself as of his own for her. She was only repelled by his coldness, and he had given her proof of how real that was exactly half an hour ago. He felt again, as he recalled the scene at the breakfast table, the soft pressure of

the lovely little hand; saw again that sweet, honest smile of love; visions of joy rose up and dazzled him: he would not look at them, and jerked his bridle so sharply, that the high-bred Kaled reared, and for an instant or two, Louis had to occupy himself in behalf of his neck instead of his heart. Presently he re-knotted the thread of his thoughts. Renunciation for himself, he could determine on; he could accept of the desolation *her* absence would bring upon him. Ah! how should he live? Well, he could try; but to know, as he did know, that he was about to stab that warm, innocent heart, given to him with the frankness of a child, yet with the controlling modesty of a woman—how was he to bear *that*, and live? such knowledge would steep him in a depth of agony he had never yet sounded. “All my own fault! all my own fault!” he exclaimed. None of his theories, which had helped him into this slough of despond, helped him out of it now. None of his diatribes against the lightness of woman’s nature, of her slavery to dress and society, her inability to stand such potent auxiliaries as “time” and “distance” when employed against her love—no, none of his bitter declamations were so good as to console him now. He even felt friendship as inimical to him, and was horror-stricken at having shut himself out from that union without which a man, sooner or later, finds his life incomplete. In this easy state of mind, foreseeing what his course must be, yet shrinking from it as from a crime, instead of the duty his conscience announced it to be, he reached the end of his ride. Once more among a group of men, noisy, excited, full of alarm, foaming with wrath, Mr. Gautier had to forget the lover, and remember his individuality as a slave-holder and planter.

He rode home late in the evening; he wished to avoid seeing Stella that night; he dreaded meeting such another look as the one of the morning. The fierce struggle between his honour and his love was over. He clearly comprehended the present, and he must not trouble himself with the future. The information gained during the day was precise enough to have made him desirous, even if Stella had been his bride, to have sent her from the island. As her guardian it was his part to ensure her personal safety. He would indeed have been thankful to have known her to be already on her way to England. He could not contemplate the isolated position of Silver Hill but with terror. If the dreaded emergency arrived, what could one man do against hosts? Die—but not

save. He should use his guardian's authority, and he would send his mother, and Olympia with her, as far as Kingston. He would not allow of a day's unnecessary delay: she must be away before Christmas. A death-like coldness crept over Louis as he thus decided. So, then, love—real, exalted, vehement love—was again burning up his heart; not a puny flame, that reason would be able to put out. He realised the strength of the new guest, now that he was trying to rid himself of it. It had come so quietly, that it had slipped unperceived into his soul; and with each day's habit, had worn a deep place for itself, without shock or excitement. Yes; love, almighty love!—he who had believed his capability for such a sensation lost. Yes, he who had echoed the most contemptuous sarcasms launched by ancient and modern in every known language at love—he—he loved as warmly, as fondly, as purely, as he had done in his early youth. He almost felt a contempt for himself. There's comfort, however, in the recollection that what has once been extinguished can be so again. No! there's no comfort in returning to his bitterness. "My darling! my darling! and must I give you up!" that was the true cry, struggling forth with each breath that he drew.

Mr. Gautier shunned the interview Olympia showed him she desired: it was by his mother's bedside that he related the rumours rife both in Kingston and the surrounding districts, of the ill-humour of the slave population. It was holding the Maman's hand in his, that he found courage to say, that such being the dangerous state of the island, he intended to insist on his cousin's immediate return to England; but he warned both his mother and Olympia not to touch on the subject of impending danger from the blacks with Stella. "It would half kill her," he added, "to think she was leaving her friends in any peril; and it might be impossible in such a case to induce her to obey me."

The Maman would not, and Olympia dared not, ask him on what grounds Stella's consent was to be obtained. "I shall send you both with her to Kingston," summed up Louis, "and you must remain there until I can believe in the safety of Silver Hill. You will do so for my sake, poor Maman." And Louis put the hand he held to his lips. Olympia scarcely noticed his unusual coldness to herself: her heart was throbbing with joy at the issue from her most pressing danger which this plan presented. It would give her breathing time:

she had still some chances in her favour. The next afternoon, when the Maman was busy with her needlewomen, and Olympia in the counting-house, the unconscious Stella seated herself at the further end of the front piazza, with one of the books sent to her by Mr. Smythe. It was a volume of Wordsworth. She was not reading attentively; rather idly turning leaf after leaf, only stopping when a line here or there caught her attention. In a little she heard a well-known step, and saw Mr. Gautier decidedly coming towards her. It was so unusual an occurrence for him to seek her that, after the first bound of happy surprise her heart gave at seeing him, her emotion changed into something not unlike fear. His face looked dragged, as if he were over fatigued. When two persons who love one another are in presence, they act and react on one another in a strange, supernatural manner. Stella instantly, before Louis had spoken a word, perceived in him the signs that are the precursors of a storm. Yet he was sitting very calmly by her side; he had taken the book from her hand, and in silence was turning over the pages. At last he made a pause, his finger accentuating, as it may be expressed, three lines of one of the smaller poems. Stella looked down to see what they were, and read—

“ True dignity abides with him alone,
Who in the silent hour of inward thought
Can still suspect and still revere himself.”

Stella watched him as if he were reading over her death-warrant; yet what could these words have in common with him or her? She exclaimed, without waiting to think further. “Cousin Louis, what is the matter?”

“You have always been a docile, obedient ward,” he began.

“Take care, cousin Louis. You want to bribe me to do something. I am not a child to require the edge of the cup to be sweetened to make me swallow a bitter draught.”

“You have been studying your Italian to some profit,” he answered. How is it, when hearts are breaking, that men and women can speak so conventionally?

“Do you remember our talking once about friendship?” he went on.

“Yes, very well—just as if it had been only yesterday. Cousin Louis, what is the matter?”

“We are friends, are we not, Stella?”

“Are we?” And the valiant eyes turned full on his,

seeking to penetrate into his thoughts. "Cousin Louis, tell me what you have come to say?"

"I have come to ask you to sacrifice your inclination to my wish—to the wish of cousin Louis." He felt as if he were seething the kid in the mother's milk.

"Anything, anything, cousin Louis," she said breathlessly.

"Then you will consent to return immediately to England." It was said in a hoarse voice.

"Leave you, cousin Louis?" burst forth in such a beseeching, childlike voice. He could not stand it. He rose, and was walking away, when she called out, "Come back, cousin Louis: do not be angry with me again." He seated himself by her, in a sort of helpless way, as if courage and recollection had deserted him. After waiting in vain for him to speak, she asked him again, "Why must I go away?"

He had forgotten all but one thing. "Because I love you," was on his lips. He never could understand how he did not fall at her feet, and tell her of his love—that he loved her more truly, more fondly, than he had ever loved in his high youth. Perhaps it was her innocent question, "Are you ill, cousin Louis?" as she marked his changing countenance, that brought him back to the recollection of the task he had set himself. He answered her abruptly: "Because I have decided that it is right you should go."

"Olympia has advised you to send me away on account of Mr. Smythe. I will tell Mr. Smythe before you, cousin Louis, that I do not wish ever to see him any more."

"Olympia has not said a word on such a subject to me."

A few months ago Stella would have continued her accusation of Olympia. She sat looking at her cousin now, with a white face, and eyes out of which all light had faded. "I will not deceive you, Stella, I never will; so help me God!" said Louis with manly energy. "I *have* more than *one* reason for wishing you to quit Silver Hill—to leave Jamaica. You once asked to be my friend, Stella. I hold you as a friend—the dearest of friends. Stella, do you believe me?—have you full confidence in me?"

"Oh, so full, so entire!"

"Then you will trust me; believe me honest in all, even if I only give you one—the least—reason for my prayer to you, to leave me—us ——" Louis's voice broke into a sob, checked instantly, yet not so instantly but that it had cut Stella to the heart.

"Tell me nothing, cousin Louis; I don't want to know. I am ready to go."

He sat quite still, his hand over his eyes, rebuked by the candid trustfulness of his young cousin. He had intended to use Celia's impertinent letter to himself as a cunning argument; he had intended to call on Stella to act so as to spare him these degrading insinuations. To have had even the intention was as if he had been desecrating a pure shrine. He suddenly felt his head clear—all confusion leave his thoughts, like one carried forth from a hot, corrupt atmosphere into the fresh air of a spring day. Too late—too late! "Forgive me, Stella," was all he could say.

"Forgive you, cousin Louis!" and she smiled on him, he turned deadly pale, his eyes flashing as he received that smile. "Call me once again your friend, cousin Louis."

"My friend," he replied, and left her. Stella was in a sort of ecstasy of suffering: she enjoyed it! it was for him! Come, more anguish! more torture! it will give her the measure, the height, the depth of her love for him.

It was clear as day that Stella's calm and Louis's strength were both factitious; the Maman and Olympia carefully respected Louis's injunctions, busying themselves with the preparations for Stella's voyage. The plan of the two other ladies being to remain in Kingston after she had sailed was never told to her; and in the confusion and distress of her own feelings, many trifles that might have enlightened her on that head passed unnoticed. "Keep my going away as quiet as you can: don't let any one know," was Stella's earnest request; "and also, cousin Louis, let it be quickly." And Louis was anxious she should be away quickly, and on board a ship before the Christmas holidays—the time most dreaded by the planters, as then their negroes for a few days enjoyed comparative freedom.

A vessel was chosen in which a lady and her daughter had already taken a passage. After that the only occupation of which Louis seemed capable was the riding to and fro between Silver Hill and Kingston. He personally escorted Stella's luggage to Miss Hawke's lodgings, where his cousin, his mother, and Olympia were to spend the night before the vessel sailed. Then, and not till then, did the house servants begin to suspect that the young lady was going away. Every time that her cousin arrived from town, Stella expected to be

told that on the morrow she was to go. Every time that she received no such summons, she felt almost happy. If that moment of farewell could be spared her! Nor was Olympia easy, even now when her most earnest desire was about to be accomplished. The dictates of truth and justice cannot be infringed even in secret, and permit the conscience of the defaulter to be tranquil. Besides, Olympia saw that life at Silver Hill would in future be a mere hollow semblance of what it had been. The sacrifice she had in a manner extorted from Gautier was too costly. She was not sure whether or not he loved Stella, but she was certain he was sorely altered to herself. A painful constraint had grown up between them: she had scarcely exchanged a word with him since the day he had told her that Stella was going to England. She must and would come to some further explanation with him. Why could she not have waited a few days longer? What impelled her to seek to obtain by a sort of force that confidence which he so sedulously avoided? How often she asked herself those two questions in after years! When she set off down the hill to meet him on his return from Kingston, whither he now went daily, she had not decided on what she was going to ask or say: all she knew was, that she would put it out of his power to shun her this time. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon, at the hour when the negroes bring in grass for the cattle, that Olympia crossed the moat. She then reconnoitred, through a small pocket telescope, the road leading by the gray rock to the river course. It had but one bend to prevent her sweeping its whole length with the glass. A group of persons were at the further extremity, but she saw they were all blacks. She sauntered on very slowly, willing to keep within sight of the house. As the men she had descried came on, Olympia cast an upward glance at the terrace, and distinctly saw Stella's figure standing clearly out against the sky. She believed that Stella could see her; but, in fact, her small person was lost amid the maze of the luxuriant vegetation overhanging the path. The voices of the approaching negroes grew audible, and the words of the song they were singing. Olympia turned hastily back towards Silver Hill, for she perceived that the men were drunk, and she fancied she distinguished Maurice's voice from among the others, and for this man she had a perfect horror: he had more than once favoured her with looks of insolent admiration, and offered her personal assistance in a way that she loathed. He had

discovered that she had refrained from any complaint of him, and it had lately taxed her prudence to keep out of his way. Ever since Mr. Joddrell's tragical fate, Olympia had more than ever decided on silence as to his behaviour. In spite of her haste the men overtook her, and they passed her quietly enough, slipping off the narrow path, holding by withes and bamboos to steady themselves. But these were only two, and she was positive she had seen three. The distant sound of the trot of a horse made her turn once more to see if Louis was in sight. She thought there was no danger now, so she retraced her steps with decision. She had reached the gray rock, when her further progress was suddenly barred by Maurice, who balanced himself so as to prevent any possibility of her being able to pass on one side of him or the other. "I'll trouble you to stand out of my way," said Olympia, with great courage.

But Maurice was royally drunk, which means he had forgotten his station altogether, and thought himself a match for any white lady in the land. "Hi! Massa Gautier grand housekeeper—how ee do, marm? bery glad to see you, marm—me lub you wid all my 'art, marm," and Maurice seized hold of Olympia's arm. The white woman, strong in the idea of her superior race, instead of screaming, twisted herself briskly round, wrenching herself from the slave's grasp, dealing him, with her small, delicate hand, a blow across the mouth. Maurice, too drunk to understand well what he was doing, closed upon her, and they were wrestling in deadly conflict; and she must have shared the fate of a sparrow in the clutch of a hawk, but for the intoxication of her opponent, when Louis rode up to them. Her supple figure was writhing in her enemy's grasp, but she was still defending herself bravely, dealing a close rain of cuffs about the eyes of the Sambo, which half blinded him. In the twinkling of an eye, Louis had jumped from his saddle, collared Maurice, and thrown him heavily on the ground. Every bone in the man's body rattled, but not a word did he utter. Louis took the bridle of his horse, and led the snorting, terrified animal past the prostrate body. "Are you hurt?" he asked of Olympia.

"No; only flurried."

"Sit down on the bank for a minute or two. Your hand is bleeding—don't talk now; you shall tell me all by-and-by." He tied his handkerchief round her lacerated fingers, lifted her into his saddle, and led Kaled quietly home.

"The man has never stirred," whispered Olympia, looking back.

"Probably he will sleep off his drunken fit there," replied Louis: "he is as safe there as anywhere."



CHAP. XL.—OVER THE EDGE.

LOUIS had thoroughly lost his usual self-possession; he was excited by the fact itself of having put forth his bodily strength—a power which all men of women born abuse with a sort of rapture. In this case, there was every excuse for Gautier's violence. He saw a woman, and a dear friend into the bargain, struggling in the grasp of a drunken man; and worse still, as his prejudices of caste made him feel, the grasp of an ignoble slave. In the whole scene there was what was peculiarly calculated to excite disgust as well as rage in him. No wonder he walked by the prostrate Maurice, saying, "Wait till to-morrow, you villain." Olympia remained silent, though she felt a qualm at leaving the motionless figure unexamined. "I shall take you round by the stables," said Louis. "I do not want the Maman to be disturbed and alarmed, or she will get no sleep to-night. Poor Maman!" he went on, "she is grown very old lately." They found Stella on the terrace, where Olympia had seen her from the road below. It was the first time since she had promised to go to England that she had come to meet Louis on his return from Kingston. "I have been alarmed," she said; "I thought I saw you fall from your horse," looking anxiously at Louis. "What has happened?"

"Your sage cousin has put himself in a passion,"—he tried to speak lightly—"and—that is the greatest evil that has occurred, except that poor Olympia has hurt her hand a little." There was something so forced in Mr. Gautier's indifference, that its unreality was at once felt by Stella. "You had better have your fingers dressed as soon as possible," went on Louis to Olympia.

They all three walked towards the house. Olympia went up the steps: it seemed to her as if all will of her own had left her. Louis lingered, and Stella said to herself, "He wishes to tell me that the hour is come," and she remained by his side. "How sweet the air is," he began; "will you

take a turn on the terrace with me?" and he took off his hat to let the breeze blow through his hair. Deep natures are like deep waters: strong must be the impulse which moves them, but once stirred it is alike long and difficult to either to find again their level. Louis wanted soothing, and he instinctively turned to the quarter from which soothing would best come to him. Stella, striving to hold fast her courage, avoided looking at him; she fixed her eyes on the sky. The sun had sunk below the distant mountains which formed the horizon of Silver Hill, but his place was still marked by the golden light shooting up into some floating purple clouds.

Women, it is said, are always more self-possessed in certain difficult circumstances than men: at all events, it was Stella who now broke the silence. Pointing to the chain of mountains, she said, "They remind me of the Jura, as we used to see them from our windows at Evian." Louis's eyes followed the direction of her finger without his bringing his mind either to the actual scene before him, or the one his companion alluded to. "Poor grandmamma! Do you know, cousin Louis, I have often thought lately that God took her away from this world in mercy."

"Perhaps. Who knows?" muttered Louis. "Life is one great mystery, and death another."

"Cousin Louis, I wish——" and Stella hesitated.

"What do you wish? You are not afraid to speak to me, are you?"

"Oh, cousin Louis! if you would *feel* that the good God is always watching over you, and all of us, I *do* think it would make you happier, and—and it would be such a comfort to me to know that you believe so, when I am far away from here."

"My good little friend, I do believe most thoroughly in a beneficent God; but consider, could the world go on as it does if God really interfered with our daily concerns, as an earthly father would do, preventing us from committing excesses, and guarding us from evil wiles?"

"No father can keep his son from doing wrong—none ever did, cousin Louis; but the father consoles and encourages the son, when he comes and confides his sorrows to him. Very often, cousin, when I have been very, very unhappy, I have said, 'Though all the world may misunderstand me, God does not,' because He sees quite into my heart, and knows all my

very most hidden motives, and that is *such* a stay in sorrow !” How was it that her voice stirred his recollections of long ago ? It was as if he had been listening to some once familiar music. How his boyhood started out from the past ! what a strange *mêlée* followed of persons, places, and feelings ! An agonizing, suffocating emotion seized Louis by the throat, choking back his words. People don’t weep in such moments : their hearts bleed. He wanted to say, “ God bless you, Stella : ” well, he did not—he could not. She suddenly took his hand. “ Cousin Louis, don’t be afraid, I will be—— Your little friend will be brave. When am I to go ? ”

“ The *Vectis* is to sail on the 24th.”

“ The day before Christmas. Just three more days here, cousin Louis. I have been so happy,” and she gave a long look at all round her, “ and you have been so good, so very good to me.”

“ Don’t say that, for God’s sake, Stella.”

“ Yes, I want you to think of that when I am gone, and that I am quite contented, quite—quite.” A little sob. “ I am going to the Maman,” and she ran up the steps. Louis would have asked for one instant more, he had so much to explain ; but she was gone. Why had she so cruelly heaped coals of fire on his head ? Ah ! poor little soul, she meant to comfort him ; she was brave, for he could see her heart break in her sweet, pale, quivering face. He had been so good to her ! how he laughed—no sob was ever more dreary. And now he might do as he liked with himself : he had proved his free will—he had seen the last of his good spirit—his guardian angel. Farewell ! Farewell !

Till a late hour that night, Stella was engaged in carefully packing into her desk what were the most prized of her possessions ; trifles to be swept away by any one else. An envelope containing the remains of a white rose Louis had once brought up from the Botanical Garden for her—indeed, there were the petals of every flower he had ever by chance given her ; one of his broken watch-guards, which she had kept, when she gave him another of her own making ; and a very poor sketch in water-colours, copied from the picture in pretty Auntie’s study. All these things marked certain white days in her life ; and as she placed them in her desk, her heart was ready to break for cousin Louis. She thought over, nay she divined much that he had to endure in his life. So

superior as he was, so unlike every one round him, and yet condemned to drag on the same life that was distasteful to the commonest white man in the island. "What one must bear, one does bear," said Stella to herself, her valiant spirit no longer able to fight away her tears. "Poor Maman! she will miss me—she will miss her daughter." Of Olympia she did her best not to think.

Once in bed, she made a rigid calculation of how many hours she had yet to remain at Silver Hill. Sixty hours: to her who had given it up as a home, this sum seemed like wealth. And after that? People do live through terrible sorrows, so I suppose I shall; yes, I shall suffer, but he thinks well of me, he approves of me, he won't forget me! How many agonized hearts that hope and belief have helped to strengthen!

The next morning, just as Stella was dressed, Olympia came into her room. "Maurice is dead!" she exclaimed; "he was found dead on the very spot where we left him."

"But it was not my cousin's fault," cried Stella, running into the sitting-room.

Louis is writing at his mother's table; the Maman is on his right, the fingers of her two hands interlocked, and her eyes fastened on the ground; her aspect that of one crushed by a blow. "Cousin Louis, no one can blame you," went on Stella, grasping at his hand, which, in her intense sympathy, she kept pressing to her heart.

"As far as it was certainly not my intention to injure him, you may say it was not my fault. Do not be so alarmed. It can be considered but a painful mischance."

"Let your cousin finish his letter, Stella, before you ask any more questions. Do not prevent his having the benefit of being the first to require an inquest." This was said by Olympia in such a tone of reproachful irritation, that Stella hastily drew back from Mr. Gautier's side.

"A few minutes more or less will make no difference," said Louis. "Old Sally was off by four o'clock this morning, to give information and lay a complaint against me, before Mr. Smythe."

"How did she know you had anything to do with it?" asked Olympia.

"You forget the two men who passed you just before you met Maurice; for anything we know they may have witnessed the whole scene."

"Then they saw Maurice's assault; at all events, their testimony is worth nothing."

"I don't know that, but I am glad I have the testimony of my own conscience that the man's death was through an accident, and not by any voluntary act of mine. Nevertheless, I am afraid an ugly business will be made of it: it will too well serve the purpose of those tampering with the negroes." Mr. Gautier then finished and sealed his letter to the coroner of the district, a certain old officer, a Colonel Bagshot.

"My good, kind friends," said Louis, as he was quitting the house, to give directions to the man he was sending to the coroner, keep your minds as tranquil as you can. Any exhibition of extravagant fear would hurt my cause; and Olympia's testimony is all that is necessary to exonerate me of any criminal intention."

"Can I *do* anything for you, cousin Louis?" asked Stella.

"Perhaps you will kindly accompany Olympia when she has to give her deposition. I wish to God I could spare either or both of you so painful a scene, but the one will support the other."

Louis was at the door when Mrs. Gautier called to him—"My dear, you have had no breakfast."

"Poor Maman!" he exclaimed, "how patiently you have been listening to us all, and never interfering even by a word!" Louis, scarcely less than the rest of the world, was apt occasionally to overlook, nay, to undervalue, the gentle and pious. We enjoy their happy influence in our homes too often without gratitude or acknowledgment.

The coroner and jury could not be hoped for, at soonest, before a couple of hours after noon, and it was now but a little after eight o'clock: nearly half a day to wait. Mr. Gautier left the house after breakfast, and did not return, though there was no work going on in the field. The Maman had her orders to give; for, being punctiliously hospitable, a second breakfast, or lunch, was to be provided for the persons coming to hold the inquest. "Are you going away, Olympia?" asked Stella. "I meant to beg you to tell me what occurred between you and Maurice. My cousin said nothing to me last evening of how you had hurt your hand."

"Maurice was excessively tipsy, and was first insolent to me, and then used personal violence to prevent my passing. Gautier found him wrestling with me, and knocked him down.

Now I am anxious to be alone, to collect my thoughts. With your strength and high spirits, you are no judge of what a nervous person suffers at the idea of being questioned by a parcel of strangers."

Strange, but perfectly true, the moment she was left by herself, without any process of inferences, deductions, or demonstrations, Stella immediately and intuitively jumped to the conclusion that Mr. Smythe was Olympia's husband. No sooner had she come to this decision, than reasons crowded up in its favour. She remembered his having said she was like some one he had known; the disgust and aversion in his face at her saying she could dance a story to music. She remembered Lady Almeria's joking him about a dancer, and his wish to avoid the recognition of her ladyship. Olympia was a dancer, Olympia was separated from her husband, there was a likeness in herself to Olympia. And the late scene in the mango grove between Olympia and herself? Could there be a doubt? She walked fast through the piazza, literally giddy with the thoughts that rose one after the other. What might not be the consequence of such a discovery? Would not Olympia have to go away? And then came a suffocating, blinding hope that she herself perhaps might not have to leave Silver Hill. With all her trust and confidence in cousin Louis, Stella had an idea that it was Olympia who was driving her forth from her Eden; but at this dangerous point her ruminations were interrupted by a succession of growls. "What can have brought Felicity from the kitchen?" wondered Stella, as she listened to the following monologue:—"Oh! Loramassy, my goodness gracious me! my ole bone dey sore, my skin sore, whateber de use 'case you be in trouble, you bring trouble to oder people; hearie you, Massa Louis, I speak to you, h-m-m? You no hold yer ugly head up to vex a body in der straits; take dat, know better 'noder time!" and Felicity knocked down the table napkin that had refused to take the shape of a mitre. "Cluck, cluck," went the old body's tongue, "me ask you now, worra ye no bear yer own trouble widout a boddering me; yer shoulder big nuff, big, like diss cuss tray. You, too, you divil!" as the tray fell with a crash, "ebery ting turned topside down in dis worl—de young die, de ole dey live."

"I thought you loved your master, Felicity?" said Stella, now addressing the irate old woman.

"Beg pardon, marm, me no hearie well."

"I thought you loved your master?" repeated the young lady.

"Felicity no hab master, marm, 'xcept," with a curtsey, "Garamighty Fader in Heben."

"I remember now," said Stella, "you belonged to the Maman, and she made you free."

"De law and me ownself set me free, marm. I hab six children living, marm, an' dat make me free, like."

"Have you heard anything about poor Maurice?"

"Me no hearie much, marm; dis no time to hearie much. I hearie dat Maurice hit stone—and stone kill him, hm-m. Some say Missy 'Lympia de deat of de sambo, me no sabey; pretty 'ooman, Miss 'Lympia, but me see ebil in her eye de fust day she comed up 'ere. Hi! Massa Louis his eye eat her up; she move about like fedder in the air. You raal 'ansome garl, like palm-tree, Miss Stella, but Miss 'Lympia she small and purty, hi!" and Felicity smacked her lips. "Hi, young lady, worra you go way, 'case why, eh?" and the withered face peered significantly into Stella's eyes.

"Because I wish to go back to England, Felicity," replied Stella, calmly.

"Bery well, marm, me no hab nothing to say against it; me glad it no Miss 'Lympia get you sent away, dat's all; me allays say, Miss Stella hab too much sperrit for act like one poor slave."

To change this dangerous subject, Stella asked—"Was there ever an inquest here before, Felicity?"

"I tink so indeed," replied Felicity, indignantly stopping short in her work, and placing her arms akimbo. "I tink so indeed. Dere was fust ole massa—he come 'ome dead on ironing board, like Maurice, dey say: he died someways no one can tell. Berry well, dat No. 1. Den Busha, he allays mortal drunk, he drop in de field, dat No. 2. Den dat Dennison, dat Missy 'Lympia she get flog, 'case no find de coffee bag—'case it stay in Kingston store for get sugar dat no tree."

"That will do, Felicity."

"Oh! berry well, you see I'se 'sperience desc matters. Miss Stella, dem' quests nothing at all. Buckras come, cock dem eye at the coppse, Massa doctor tickle him wid de littel finger. Jidge and jury say, Garamighty him do it. No need be 'fraid, Miss Stella. Massa Louis no do noting. Maurice hit stone and stone kill him: quite right, when he sich big fool."

"I think you are a wicked old woman," exclaimed Stella. "I wonder you show so little feeling for the family who have always treated you so kindly."

"Hi, me missus, we all wicked vessels," and Felicity gave a sigh more like a groan.

The sound of the ring of horses' feet on the rocky path made Stella run into the piazza, Felicity waddling after her. "Who is that?" asked the young lady as the first rider came up to the door.

"Dat Colonel Bagshot, he hab place call Besom." Felicity meant Bergen-op-zoom. "Dat next one," with an accent of infinite contempt, "dat Busha from Rocky Valley, and dat, and dat, dem ebery one Bushas; dat de doctor. Hi—dis one, raal gran genelman, fine man; me 'prove him now, me young garl; he de friend of de pore black man."

"Hi, young missus, dat person kiss the ground under young lady's feet: me sees him de oder day, hat in his hand, so sweet like. Mr. Smit, he de man for my money; he come from good King Billy." Felicity had described the coroner and jury very correctly. Of proprietors, there was but Colonel Bagshot; the owners of all the other neighbouring properties were absentees, their overseers came in their stead.



CHAP. XLI.—COME AT LAST.

WHEN all was once quiet in the house, Stella ventured out of her hiding-place to seek Mrs. Gautier. The Maman is in her usual seat, with the large Bible open before her. She beckons Stella to her side, points with her finger to a verse, but Stella shakes her head. "I cannot see, Maman," and crouches down by Mrs. Gautier's side. The poor girl's heart is full of fear: the first excitement is over, and she is now picturing to herself Louis standing by the side of dead Maurice; and the horrible stories she had read of the corpse bleeding when touched by the murderer, fix themselves in her brain and whisper there. But how cruel of her to think of murder? How long will it last? What can they have to say, when the case is so clear? There is a step on the terrace: she knows that foot which takes so firm a hold of mother earth, Louis is before her. "Do not be alarmed, Stella; there is no cause to be so, dear Maman; but where is Olympia? She must be so good as to give her evidence."

"Olympia, why don't you come?" screamed Stella, stamping impatiently. Olympia opened her door. Stella seized her by the arm, but Olympia, instead of coming forward, dragged Stella into her room. "Oh, Stella, help me! I cannot face my enemy before all those rude, vulgar men; and Gautier—he will hate and despise me."

"Then Mr. Smythe is your husband!" exclaimed Stella.

"Who told you? But never mind now. Keep me from him, Stella! Do something for me! I cannot—I cannot meet him, and Louis looking on."

"But you must!—you shall!" cried Stella, recovering all her recollection at the sound of Louis's name. "Are you going to put a man's life in danger, because you are afraid of evil to yourself? If you do not go, I will; and I'll tell the reason why you refuse to come, and Louis will despise you. Is that your affection—fearing only for yourself?"

"You are very heroic at my expense, Stella."

"I do not mind in the least what you say or think of me," said Stella; "but you must go."

"There is only slaves' evidence—there is no danger for Gautier."

"But he must be cleared of all blame: you shall not allow a doubt to overshadow his character. Go!" went on the inexorable Stella, "and I will never tell Louis how you have hesitated: you shall have all the credit of the sacrifice," she added, bitterly.

"Send Gautier away: I will go by myself."

"You are not intending to make your escape?"

"Of what avail? You know my secret. The wounded deer is tracked to its covert?"

Stella left her for an instant. "My cousin is gone," she said, returning. "I will accompany you; and neither Mr. Smythe nor any one else shall come near you while I am there." Olympia threw a black lace veil over her head, and accepted the support of Stella's arm, who quite forgot that she was walking through the sun bareheaded. Stella had no sooner secured the advantage for Louis, than her heart began to quake for Olympia. The one was not more trembling than the other as they entered the large room of the sick house. Negroes crowded it to suffocation; for Mr. Gautier had expressly given permission for all the property hands to be present who chose to be so. Olympia took the chair Louis offered to her; Stella refused to sit: she stood behind Olym-

pia's chair, her hands resting on the back, in the unconscious attitude of a guardian angel. Once again Louis recognized her resemblance to Raffaele's archangel in the Louvre. Curiosity attracted every glance first to Olympia: none of the white men assembled there, excepting Dr. M'Neil, had ever done more than catch a passing glimpse of her. Mrs. or Miss Olympia was an unsolved problem in the neighbourhood. A child is not more eager after a secret than a man. A lady with only a Christian name was a mine for conjectures. She must show her face now, and speak out. But while all were inquisitive about Olympia, there was not one present whose better nature did not bow down in respect before the young girl Stella, whose beauty was so manifestly the incarnation of a pure heart.

You may perchance, reader, have remarked the sobriety the entrance of a modest young girl will produce in any assembly of persons. It does not require beauty to effect this—it is the real virginal nature, unscathed by evil passions, that excites a feeling of almost reverence. It is a something different from the veneration we feel for tried virtue in matronhood. To a wife or mother, cognisant of all the littlenesses of humanity, the sinner can humble himself, without feeling an impassable gulf between them: not so with an innocent girl. Words are involuntarily chastened before her, wit repressed, allusions avoided: in her form, the ideal of purity is worshipped, and this without the witchcraft of classical outlines. It had been seldom, or in forgotten days, that any of these men had come into the presence of a creature like Stella. Those loud, cruel, uneducated, sensual men lowered their eyes and voices with involuntary humility. Thank God! none of mankind are so hardened that, for a time, at least, they do not feel an enthusiasm for the representation of what is good. Surely those twelve persons there assembled were odd specimens of the creation. Men, the purple of whose faces, their misty eyes and sodden features, found an explanation in the long tenpenny nail hanging as a badge at their button-hole: that nail measuring the depth of the rum in each tumbler, drained many times a day. Men who could not sign their names until one or two such draughts had been swallowed. Others, lean, yellow, with red-rimmed, sunken eyes, above their leathery lantern jaws; these were the cruelest; the men striving to make money, honestly if they could, but money at any rate. One or two late importations

of book-keepers there were, like Mr. Boggis, with the freshness of home still on heart and face, and lastly two as fine types of manhood, in Stapylton Smythe and Louis Gautier, as the world could show. Every one of them, from the highest to the lowest, felt themselves kept in check by that beautiful girl; her eyes so full of divine pity as they travelled earnestly from one face to the other, full of sympathy as well as pity when they met Louis's glance. The irreverent and careless tone of the investigation was dismissed, and, "Your name, madam?" asked the coroner, addressing Olympia. She put aside her veil, showed her waxen white face, still very lovely, and pronounced quietly, "Nena Smith, born Perez."

Mr. Smythe started to his feet as she removed her veil, and in that instant Louis comprehended that he saw Olympia's husband. What a rush of conflicting, confused feelings overwhelmed him. The fatal precipitation of his own resolves, the entanglement in which he was wrapped, the deceit, if not treachery, of one on whom he for so many years had leant in trusting friendship—one thought coursed after the other, like wave on wave, bruising and stunning his heart. He felt ready, nay, burning with desire, to take vengeance on himself. When he recovered some portion of self-possession, Olympia had just finished her deposition, and Mr. Smythe, in right of his claims as slave-protector, was plying her with a volley of subtle and searching questions. The jurors one and all guessed that something of more thrilling interest dictated this bitter cross-examination than desire for elucidation as to a slave's death. Olympia's eyes met those of Mr. Smythe firmly; they seemed, as she looked, to grow to a point and pierce him, as a sharp weapon might have done. He winced. Mr. Smythe was not so clear of conscience that he dared to run to bay that irritated woman. Colonel Bagshot (the coroner) at length interfered, and said it was clear as a pike-staff, no other conclusion could be come to, than that the unlucky Maurice had met his death by what the law called misadventure.

Mr. Smythe begged to remind the coroner "that dead men tell no tales."

"A very unfair remark," replied the coroner; "for it conveys an insinuation of the truth of what both the witness and Mr. Gautier have said, for any doubt of which there is not the least proof."

Mr. Smythe said it was not likely that there had been any conduct on the part of the deceased to justify Mr. Gautier's

violence, and he repeated again that it was well that dead men *could* tell no tales. "I apply for the inquiry to be adjourned, though I am sorry to disturb the touching unanimity of coroner and jury as to the cause of the death of this poor black."

"A man and a brother," interpolates, in an ironical tone, one of the yellowest, thinnest men in a white suit.

"Mr. Gautier is aware," went on Mr. Smythe, "that I am under great obligations to him; therefore he will not mistake my motives for pressing for an adjournment of this inquiry. I warn Mr. Gautier that I shall endeavour to have the matter taken up by higher authority than that of the coroner of the district."

"Hear, hear!" cried two or three voices, jocularly.

"Better days, good days ——" resumed Mr. Smythe.

"Wish we could see them," cried out one of the jurors.

"Better days," he proudly affirmed, "were at hand, when the abnormal protection now provided for one class of his Majesty's subjects would not be required; he alluded to his own office as slave protector."

"We don't recognize you or your office," cried several voices.

"Yes, a good time was at hand," went on Mr. Smythe, "when the black would receive his rights, and be declared equal in the eyes of the law, as he was in those of the Creator, to the white. Listen, my black friends," turning to the negroes; "I am ready at all times to give you the benefit of my advice. Remember, your hours of labour are limited, and measures are being taken for your emancipation by the good King of England and his ministers."

"Garamighty bless King Billy and Massa Smit to everlasting glory," shouted the blacks, understanding of the harangue only this, that it was in their favour.

The coroner twirled his thumbs as he listened to the oration of the fine gentleman.

"Be quiet, you black idiots!" he cried, "and be off out of this, every man jack of you, and women too, hearee!" When the room was cleared, the angry old man said to Mr. Smythe, "Thank you, sir, for your word in season. Gentlemen, I propose a vote of thanks to this worthy stranger, who has picked up an appointment dropped from the moon; for no one on earth knows what a 'Slave Protector' is!" Then passing from his attempt at sarcasm to the broad reality of passion, "I look on you, sir, by G— I do, as a pestilent

incendiary; and by G— if we have an insurrection, as I devoutly believe we shall, I'll shoot you, sir, as I would a mad dog. It's not the blacks that will plan an outbreak, so I warn you, I shoot a ringleader, black, white, or brown, and be d—d to slave protection. Jamaica is a morass, gentlemen, and we are floundering in it, and very soon the quicksands below will be above our heads."

Here one of the wisest of the jury whispered to the coroner, who, wiping the angry moisture from his brow, exclaimed—

"Verdict! Why, where's there any room for doubt?"

Mr. Smythe said, "Allow me to claim your patient attention for a minute, Colonel Bagshot. As for your threats of personal violence, they are beneath my notice. Whatever your verdict, I shall not alter my intentions a tittle. I apply again for an adjournment."

"Can't see any grounds for assent, sir. If you can discover anything, *do*; no one prevents your going to Old Nick to ask. I don't care a Scotch boddle for you, or your protestations, or applications. In all countries, among Turks or Anthropophagi, a man has a licence to defend himself, without mentioning a helpless woman. I'd like to see the nigger that would raise his finger to me; I'd crack his head as I would a cocoa-nut—the thing it's likest, by jingo!—and any man's afterwards, who dared to say I hadn't ought to. Verdict!" he repeated; "well, gentlemen, I suppose we are agreed: if we ain't, say so. What do you call this transaction?"

The foreman of the jury said, "They all were of opinion that it was what the coroner had styled it—a misadventure."

"You hear, Mr. Gautier, our inquiry has terminated: the transaction is a misadventure, in so far as you have lost a slave, but the island is a gainer, in that it has a rogue and incendiary the less. My respects to your good mother. Ladies, your obedient, humble servant," and with a bend of the body, the pale reflection of what had been his best bow when a young man, Colonel Bagshot, dragging at his braces, waistcoat he had none, was slipping heavily by Olympia, when Mr. Gautier said—

"One word, Colonel Bagshot, before we part. I am obliged to you and the jurors for the confidence you have shown in my word. Mr. Smythe has, however, made too grave a protest against your verdict for me to let the inquiry end here.

The Custos is absent in Kingston; I shall therefore ride down this very evening, and offer to surrender myself to undergo any further trial or examination, that can satisfy the most intolerant suspicions."

"Lord, my dear sir, what's the use?" exclaimed the Colonel, "and who the deuce is going to believe you would willingly kill a fine slave? Preposterous! I wouldn't believe it, if dead men did tell tales. Don't you do it, Gautier—it's a bad precedent. Let's see you soon at Bergen-op-zoom."

Olympia all this time, and while the jury were taking their departure, had sat as still as a statue. Stella longed to leave that dreadful room, to go to the Maman, but she had no courage to move. When only Olympia, Stella, Mr. Smythe, and himself, were left, Louis went up to his cousin, and pronounced the monosyllable, "Go!" She looked round, and saw Mr. Smythe watching them.

"Cousin, you ought to go at once to the Maman."

"Go, Stella!"

"Let her stay if she chooses," said Olympia, breaking her silence; "let her be an impartial witness of what must take place, I suppose. Mr. Smith, have you anything to say to me?"

"To ask forgiveness for my unpardonable intrusion, and to withdraw, would doubtless be my duty," he answered, re-seating himself, and scrutinizing her with curiosity. "Ten years, the length of the siege of Troy, must have no doubt given you a hope of impunity for the rest of your life. Be satisfied: I have no wish to disturb your happiness, nor probably have you any design on my liberty. We might give the readers of newspapers the enjoyment of a scandalous story, but that would be a certain evil against an uncertain good. On the whole, I had better let you wander about the world, calling yourself Helen or Diana, or any other appellation you think appropriate."

"You are a bad-hearted man," flashed out Stella, "to take such a cruel advantage of your position."

"Those are hard words in the mouth of an old friend, Miss Joddrell," sneered Mr. Smythe. "Allow me to observe, in my turn, that you take advantage of your position as a woman."

Mr. Gautier bade Stella go, with a look and a gesture which admitted of no further objection. She took Olympia's

arm, and they passed out of the sick house first, the two gentlemen following.

Louis had needed all his self-control to keep him from giving way to the leaven of resentment, which was fermenting within him, at the part played by Mr. Smythe in regard to himself, and especially at his coarseness to Olympia. He had felt the whole time, that under the present circumstances, he would not be justified in realizing the threat, of which he had once made Stella the confidante, viz., that if ever he and Olympia's husband met, it would be in deadly struggle. But if morally handcuffed, in so far as Olympia was concerned, it was otherwise as regarded his cousin and ward. He was free—nay, in duty bound, so passion prompted—to resent the taunt implied in Mr. Smythe's last words to her. So he said, lowering his voice, "I wish you to understand, sir, that there is not one of the words which you could not resent as coming from a woman, that I do not endorse—I, a man."

"Do you, indeed!" observed Mr. Smythe, with a diabolically provoking smile.

"Yes, all and each of them. To-morrow, I shall be occupied in town with this business. Once that is arranged, I shall be to be found, either there or here."

"I wish you well through your occupations," retorted Mr. Smythe, his face livid with anger and hatred: there was something unnatural in the sight, for his features were not made to express strong passions. "It is not my intention to make any demand on your time. It is part and parcel of my philosophy, not to think any woman worth the risk of a man's life."

They had just reached the upward turn of the path to the house, as he spoke these words. Olympia suddenly confronted him, saying, "Mr. Smith, our road and yours do not lie further in the same direction."

"You are both kind and candid. Have you nothing further to say?"

"Nothing."

"I suppose I am not to know, or inquire, as to what life you mean to lead in future?"

"The future is neither yours nor mine."

"Very true, if not novel. Then farewell! Allow that I am most accommodating. And now as to your kind hints, Mr. Gautier, all I can say is, that I have noted them, and——to our next merry meeting."

There was both irony and bravado in the emphasis laid on these last words. Mr. Smythe turned on his heel, and left them. They could hear him whistling, what Mr. Gautier and Olympia recognized as Macheath's air,

"How happy could I be with either,
Were t'other dear charmer away."

Louis neither spoke to his two companions, nor looked at them, as they pursued their way; but Stella, for the first and last time, saw his face suffused by a deep red flush, like that of one determined to bear mortal agony without uttering one groan. Let that human being who has never experienced the cruel pang of the break-down of his confidence in a trusted friend, be very thankful for the mercy; it is an anguish past words. Mrs. Gautier was seated where Stella had left her. The Bible indeed was open before her, but her eyes were cast down, her hands clasped in her usual attitude of passive resignation. It seemed as if she could not be roused to any active sign of distress. She waited like one schooled in suffering. "The verdict was 'Death by misadventure,' mother," said Louis. "However, I must go to Kingston this evening about the matter. Our new neighbour, Mr. Smythe, in his character of slave protector, is inclined to dispute the fairness of the award." Mr. Gautier sat himself down in the low chair, Stella's customary seat.

"I am very tired," he added, and placed his head on the Maman's knee. "There is a noise and a singing in my ears, as if my head were under water."

The words were scarcely uttered before he fell asleep; a sudden, deep, dreamless sleep, which sometimes knocks a man down as with a blow, after an overpowering mental excitement.



CHAP. XLII.—THE DANCER'S STORY.

STILL holding by Stella's arm, without more than a glance at Mrs. Gautier and her son, Olympia went into her own room. She almost forced Stella to sit down on a chair by the window, while she herself took a seat directly opposite her. Stella hesitated to look at her companion: there was still too much of the heaving of the recent agitation about her to allow of anything like reflection or judgment. She stared at the ex-

tensive view, not with enjoyment or consciousness of its beauty, but with a strain to trace every indentation in the chain of the distant mountains, the blue summits of which were scarcely to be distinguished from the sky. Olympia scanned Stella long, then she said, in a dry staccato voice—"There is a Spanish proverb which affirms, *Dos pardales en una espiga, hacen maladiga*. You don't know Spanish?—it means, Two sparrows on one ear of corn make ill agreement. Do you apply it?"

"No," replied Stella, gravely and coldly.

"That is, you will not. However, it is not bad advice, and I am going to follow it. I, the oldest sparrow, mean to take flight, and leave the corn undisputed to the young one. There can be no use in your going to England now; you had better say so at once, in your own frank way, to your cousin: it would be too mortifying if both sparrows flew away."

"Why do you purposely add bitterness to what is already bitter, Olympia?"

"I don't do it purposely. Every drop of blood in my veins has gall in it. Do you expect to get figs from thorn-trees, or honey from wasps? The same hand made thorns and wasps as created figs and bees. Every creature and thing lives according to the nature given to it. You have no right to find fault with the one for wounding, or to admire the other for its sweetness; rather ask why should there be thorns or stinging insects? What have I done that my whole life should have been so warped, and split, and lacerated? I have never committed any crime. God help me! I have been nothing worse than a fool—a blind fool; as many women are, have been, and will be.

"I was once a public target for Cupid's arrows. Richard Smith, for that's his real name, was among my adorers: he was the poorest.

"Did I love Mr. Smith? In truth, I can scarcely answer. A woman cannot help taking an interest in a man who has asked her to marry him, and with whom she has decided to pass the rest of her life. Besides, though I belonged to the stage, I was not protected by that cuirass of experience worn by many of my playfellows, poor good souls! better, I believe, in their errands, than I with my *sang-froid* and prudence.

"I will tell you what *did* invest Mr. Smith with a degree of fascination for me: his power, as I thought, to take me out of *my* class into *yours*, Stella. I was as pure as a woman of

my profession can be, who has eyes, ears, and understanding ; but I had no illusions as to heroes. I was too early behind the scenes. I had never had any youthful dreams. I had always been close enough to the realities of life to see its repulsive features very clearly. What irritated me most in my position was, the weights and measures used by such as you for such as me. I declare to heaven, I believe that women before the footlights imagine that the women behind them are born to a different morality. I was a good daughter. I worked for my daily bread ; I gained it honestly, spent it honestly. I never turned away from an unfortunate who was poor, though I did not consort with the unfortunate who were rich. Yet none except my comrades and my mother held me as a respectable member of society. Ah ! it's always a long story when one gets on one's wrongs—when one wishes to give reasons for a stupid step. For a time, the passion that predominated in me was ambition to be acknowledged respectable by the privileged class. I knew the pretender to my hand was poor—probably over head and ears in debt. Though I was beautiful, I did *not* think—not quite, at least—that he was in love with me. Women, in all their blindness, have illuminations of themselves and of others. Strange it is how they consciously, voluntarily, shut their eyes, when the gratification of a passion allures them. Passion, Stella, includes many other items besides love ; though young ladies, and old too, have an idea that it is only a proper word when it is used to denote a fit of anger. Ambition, all selfish interests, my dear novice, are stronger than the passion of love, when a man is above thirty and a woman twenty-five. At first I said to myself, It is a fair exchange—he gives me the station I covet, and he takes my money. I had, of course, after being so long a favourite with the public, realized a considerable sum ; sometimes my hands were filled to overflowing with gold. Little by little, however, other and softer thoughts crept into my heart or brain—I don't know which. My betrothed was uncommonly handsome ; his voice perfection ; and to these gifts he added an amount of general knowledge, that wherever I saw him with other men gave him a clear superiority. I was first gratified, then proud, and presently he became as a god to me. Plenty of proofs to the contrary had I, to be sure—no lack of inconsistencies and meannesses : my penetration served me abominably well, and yet I was carried away by the new feeling that had taken possession of

me. Once he should have ample means, those flaws would disappear: no one, till tried, can tell how the want of money may lower a man's idea of what is strictly honourable. Such was my argument. Ay di me! Mr. Smith was my husband! That word 'husband' has a magical power over woman, Stella. I do not believe that any bride ever pronounced it for the first time, without recording an unbidden, secret vow to love and obey. My belief is, that if a man could only be really tolerably unselfish with his wife, no wife but would sacrifice heaven and earth for him. I was no longer Nena Perez—I was married, covered with respectability from head to foot by that ægis, the title of Mrs. Richard Smith. I shall not tell you what a fool I was for some time—how I enjoyed going as a spectator, as *Mrs. Smith*, to operas and ballets. How I played at being a bourgeoisie, dressing soberly, and keeping household accounts; putting myself to school with all sorts of teachers, to learn to be my husband's fitting companion, et cetera, et cetera. I suppose no one escapes living in a fool's paradise once in their lives.

"You think that human beings are always all of a piece—that Mr. Smith must always have been bad, and that your cousin Louis, for instance, never had a weakness. Hm! I am going through a course of philosophy for your benefit. Believe me, Stella, men and women, the very best of them, are unstable: no one is constant, no one invincible; unless, indeed, those who have the temperament of stagnant water. Happiness and sorrow, love and hatred, fear and courage, alternate in our souls, and during their various reigns we are various characters. It is not duplicity makes us so—we are instruments on which the passions play; as well accuse your piano of duplicity, because it is as willing to afford you merry as sad music. Lastly, never look for durability on this side the grave."

"And our will, Olympia—does that play no part in our lives? I feel I am no puppet at the mercy of every blast that blows through my soul—I can choose between right and wrong."

"And you think, poor child, that by choosing the right you insure happiness? You think it is my own fault that I am wretched?"

"No, no, Olympia, I am not such a child but that I know that there are lives which seem fatally pursued by sorrow after sorrow; and it would be wicked of any one to say that

it was the sufferer's own fault. Only I believe, that with the sense of having done or tried to do right for God's sake, we can bear our trials. Oh, Olympia! look at the Maman, so sorely afflicted as she has been; and yet she does not call herself *wretched*. After all, it is but for a few years."

"My dear, I am delighted that you are so easily satisfied; I strongly advise your remaining in your present frame of mind, willing to wait patiently for your happiness till you go to the next world. I don't know whether you are to afford me an example of what I have never yet met with, except in old-fashioned novels—I mean of consistency; but this I assure you, that of all the many common human pendulums peopling the earth whom I have known, my husband was the one that swung most continuously between right and wrong. If he had had a little more heart, or a little less, I think he might have been a successful man. He was overbalanced by his vanity. I have often heard the remark, 'Oh! how full of vanity he or she is!' and few seem to think that vanity is beyond a puerile fault. I am sure it is the prolific mother of crime. The very meanest phases of vanity were Mr. Smith's: he was essentially what a clever writer designates as a 'woman astonisher.' He frittered away in some woman's boudoir talents sufficient to have gained him a solid fortune. At the instant when some effort of his own or of his friends—and he had more than once a devoted friend—was about to be crowned with success, he threw away the substance to flutter after some whim—some painted butterfly. One might have forgiven him had he lost the world for a Cleopatra; but, no: the third-rate goddess of a third-rate town had the same force of attraction for him within her sphere, as the Juno, Minerva, or Venus of Olympus. I needn't tell you that, for you have seen him at work.

"Mr. Smith, after his marriage, became a picture fancier. I can see him now," said Olympia, while her face contracted with an expression of pain and disgust, "pointing his long, thin, white fingers at some hitherto undiscovered beauty in some of his wonderful purchases bought for nothing, sold for something; the buyers generally cut him afterwards—it did not matter, he could always make new acquaintances. Then he became a writer of pamphlets on commerce—that brought him into the company of some of the more responsible members of society. He travelled, leaving me with my mother in Paris.

"After one absence unusually long, he returned in the

most sanguine and affectionate of moods. Do you guess why? He was ruined; or, rather, he had ruined me—that was all. I was a dancer, you remember, and never had thought of the sensible arrangement of a marriage settlement. When I gave myself, I gave all my worldly goods into the bargain.

“Certain bills must be paid, or he would—don’t laugh now, Stella—or he would cut his throat. Yes, and he actually did give it a scratch, sufficient to send specks of blood on my white dress, and to terrify me into the only fainting fit I can boast of. The upshot was, Mrs. Richard Smith must resume her name of Nena Perez, and pirouette money into the conjugal purse. Hop, hop! presto! prestissimo! higher! higher yet, Nena! It takes a good deal of heartlessness, Stella, to make a woman give up a man she feels is dependent on her—it does, indeed; besides, Mr. Smith’s health was delicate: he looked dying; that was a part of his luck. Well, I did return to my profession, though I would rather have taken in plain work. For his sake I danced, and I succeeded in clearing him of debt. Young girl, did you ever try to picture to yourself what hell may be like! what the continual burning and the tearing of your flesh by fiery pincers is like! and worse still, what it is to be hopeless—for ever and ever hopeless?” Olympia rose, and walked up and down the room with a quick, hurried step, speaking in an excited voice. “Fancy it all, and you will not reach to what a weak, vain, selfish man, with low—low ambitions can inflict on his wife and family. I see in your eyes a proud look, which means that you could never be taken in to link your fate with such a man. Not if he carried his character printed on him in large letters. Was not Eve taken in by the serpent and his brilliant coat? Words can banish reason as much as strong liquors do: they go to the head, if not to the heart. Mr. Smith veered to every point of his character while I was yet with him. His pursuits were equally varied. He was scientific, and on the eve of a great discovery in metals; industrial, and he was to become a partner in a first-rate manufactory—a speculation, of course. His ventures were sometimes in the sentimental line. He had a new host of Platonic friends, and got together quite a nice little collection of china and articles of vertu, a nice little library of poetical works, elegant bibles and prayer-books, sacred lyres and dew-drops, to add to the one contributed to the general

stock at the time of our marriage. Oh! it was odious in every way!

"As he seldom dined at home, he grudged every one of our table expenses; he grudged me even the barren title of his wife—he did indeed, though I was putting clothes on his back and food into his mouth. He did that wrong, however, carefully; he did not intend to deprive himself of the goose that was laying the golden eggs. Nevertheless, the report came to my dear old mother's ears. She had borne a great deal cheerfully for my sake; my mother, one of your grandmothers, Stella, was a good woman, though only a Spanish street-dancer. She did not silently endure this last insult. My hero threatened to turn her out of doors; he did not do so, merely because he knew I would have openly exposed his conduct, and had Mrs. Richard Smith printed on the play-bills. I made a vow then, and I have kept it. It would have broken that old woman's heart had I done anything that could have given a sure foundation for scandal. So I bore and forbore, as long as she lived. Till her death I was Mr. Smith's marionette—after that, *vogue la galère*. When she died—the only creature who ever really loved me—I laid the half of the last salary I received in my husband's desk. He was out that day at a picnic in the suburbs of London. I went and had a view of him reclining on the grass at a flaxen-haired English girl's feet. I overheard his whisper to the young creature's mother or aunt: 'She is a girl to live and die for;' and then I turned my back, left him to his fate, and went to seek my own. Do you know what I did? Having just lost sight of my mother in the grave, and had a glimpse of my husband, as I have stated, I had small chance of keeping my head steady enough to guide the capering of my feet. So I took my passage to a French island, and to make it difficult to trace me, called myself Madame Olympia. My aim was to reach Jamaica—to seek your father, Stella. He had been my sister's husband, and he was literally the only connection I knew of in the wide world. He was rich, well born, and had married a poor unknown girl. Ergo, he must be a large-hearted man, and would assist me—protect me.

"When I arrived in Jamaica from Guadaloupe, Mr. Jodrell was in England—had taken you thither. I remembered Silver Hill; I had played there when a child. I remembered that Mr. Gautier, the present proprietor's father, had saved all

our lives. I could not recollect ever having seen the Maman, but then, had not my sister been her adopted daughter? For once, I was lucky. I was received,—oh! so kindly! Louis Gautier had but just arrived; to mother and son I told my story, the whole of it. I concealed nothing; neither my real name, nor the paltry motive which had helped to make me Mrs. Smith. The good souls comforted me, promised me shelter as long as I needed it. At length your father came back from England, and I had an interview with him. He was civil; offered me money, if I wished to return to Europe, or go to America; he advised my going to New Orleans, and said he was willing to establish me there as a dancing mistress. I saw he felt that I was a family connection to be decently smothered. He greatly approved of my not calling myself Nena Perez: it was too celebrated a name, he said gallantly, to suit my wish to remain incognita even in the mountains of Jamaica. I might have done so, as you saw to-day, without any risk to myself. Not one of those twelve men pricked up their ears when I pronounced it; not even that old war-horse, Colonel Bagshot, who must have been on the Continent when the name of Nena Perez was ringing as far and wide as that of Napoleon or Wellington. So much for fame!”

Stella was surprised at Olympia's tone of pique as she thus alluded to herself. Strange, she could have such recollections in an important crisis of her life like the present, thought the inexperienced listener.

Olympia, after a short silence, continued:—“The fact was, your father did not wish his marriage with Pepita Perez to be talked about: she was under the ground; what would be the use of raising her? He laughed when I refused to be called Smith, assuring me it was a capital travelling name. I must have gone to America, but that Mrs. Gautier and her son bade me remain at Silver Hill, if I could be contented in such a solitude. God bless them! they never made me feel my dependence: they made me one of the family. Did I say I was happy for years? It was Elysium to me. For the first time in my life, I had companionship; and what did I care for so-called society? Your father preserved my secret, as it was his secret also. That I was a mystery, and that the planters' ladies shook their heads about me—that even Miss Portia gave me her coldest shoulder—was not worth even a smile. Besides, I had served my apprenticeship to that sort of thing.”

Olympia ceased speaking, nor did Stella interrupt the pause. She longed to hear more; for now came the breathless interest of the story for her. "What a home it was!" sighed Olympia, "till you made it into purgatory, Stella. Very soon I shall be in the lowest circle of the tortured." Olympia sat with her face buried in her hands, her two elbows on her knees.

"Did you know it was your Mr. Smythe who was my Aunt Dashwood's friend?" asked Stella, briefly, without noticing Olympia's last words.

"If there were any use in saying 'No,' I would say it, but I reply, 'Yes.' The description was too accurate to allow of mistakes: in spite of the Y and the E he had adopted—in spite of the Stapylton—I knew it must be him; it was all so characteristic of Richard Smith."

"Then why did you not tell my cousin? He knew your story already."

"You think it so easy, do you, always to see your way? You will find out the contrary before you are much older. Why did I not tell? There were a thousand Why's. I was afraid on my own account—afraid for Gautier. I hated the idea of any discussions about me. Louis might have been prejudiced against me, with Mrs. Dashwood at hand to point the moral of my tale. I could guess the mercy she would show me, and I was not ignorant of the instability of human beings—even of Gautier, Stella. I have learned only to reckon on myself, for myself. Some of your dreadful good people would have been reading the marriage service to Mr. Smith—perhaps subscribing large sums to send him after me. Don't you know what a rage there is for doing good and peacemaking in the world? No: I could not write the acknowledgment; and when Gautier came back, I believed myself safe. If I cursed you, and wished you evil upon evil, it would be only natural. You it is who have brought all these troubles on me. What is there about you, I wonder, that catches men's hearts? You'll allow, I must have had a treble sight to have foreseen that my husband would cross the Atlantic after you. Droll enough that he should find me instead. It's like one of Harlequin's tricks."

"You are mistaken in your suppositions about Mr. Smythe and myself," said Stella.

"Do call him Smith, girl. What! didn't he smile in your face, and tune up his voice to nightingale sweetness, when he

answered your naïve questions? Didn't he make you understand that however he might pay compliments to others, what he whispered to you was as true as the sun which shineth by day? Has he never stood by your side, and looked unutterable things at the moon which shineth by night, or at the stars, when there was no moon. I know it all by heart."

"He did, I think, try to make me like him; but it was not in that way. He was really kind: he used to teach me."

"Little idiot! However that may be, heaven, or something else, has decreed enmity between you and me, Stella—we cross one another every way: the cards favour you just now, but we shall see whether you will succeed in binding the sacrifice to the altar. If I have lost the place I held with Gautier, I fancy I have effectually prevented any other from occupying it. He would doubt an angel from heaven now, and I am glad of it."

"I do not know, or wish to know," replied Stella, "whether Mr. Gautier's feelings towards you have been such as to prevent his forming an attachment to another woman: but this far is clear—that not even your unfortunate position gives you a right to suppose any unwomanly step on my part."

Stella spoke with a calm dignity Olympia had never noticed in her before. It stung her into saying—"You know that you refused to go to England after your father's death, because you loved Louis."

"By what right do you seek to penetrate into the secrets of my heart, Olympia? If I do love my cousin, I break no law in doing so."

"You shot that arrow at me, but it does not hit. What allows you to hint that my feelings for Mr. Gautier ever went beyond the strict limits of friendship? Your residence here is one proof that they did *not*," added Olympia, haughtily.

"Then, why be so cruel and bitter to me?"

"I cannot help it. Go away; the sight of you hurts me more than anything else. Leave me alone." Stella rose to obey in silence. Ere she reached the door, Olympia called out, "How tall you are! It never struck me so much before, though Gautier wrote me that your height spoilt your looks—at least, in his opinion; and Stella——" Stella fled from the bitter woman.

CHAP. XLIII.—TIME WANES.

A GREAT mixture of feelings warred in Stella when she obeyed Olympia's command to leave her, and made the girl unwilling, almost afraid, to go where she might expect to meet Mr. Gautier. Stella had long ago understood that Olympia was in secret her enemy, and the confidences just received had apprised her of nothing new in this respect. Many of us smother a discovery, in dread of the desolation its bursting forth into light may bring us. Doubt and distrust once hatched grow quickly, for they find plentiful food in inferences. The confirmation of the fact of unworthy rivalry gained from the lips of her unhappy relation, made Stella inexpressibly miserable—more miserable than she had ever been. She shrunk from the recollection of her cousin's call on her to return to England, and of all it implied. The very flash she had noticed in his eyes when the recognition had taken place between Mr. Smythe and Olympia—even the resolute manner with which Louis had avoided all speech with Olympia—were to Stella revelations of how deep the stab, and dear the hand which had inflicted it. So ingenious are girls in love to torment themselves! The reader, unlike poor Stella, need scarcely be told that other feelings than those of wounded affection had kindled in Mr. Gautier's eyes that angry fire noticed by his young cousin. Resentment at the discovery of a patent duplicity, shame at having misplaced his trust, remorse at having committed an injustice towards Stella, had had their full share in the shock experienced by Louis. The twinkling of an eye had sufficed to make him perceive that Olympia was aware beforehand of Mr. Smythe's identity with her husband. For how long or how short a time had she had this knowledge? Most likely ever since his letters to her from Waterloo Cottage. And yet she had received his written communications about Mr. Smythe's attentions to Stella in silence; his spoken fears with shrugs of her shoulders, or exclamations against the folly of girls. How many more secrets might have been equally well preserved! how many equivocations might he not have accepted as God's truth! Louis was in the mental condition of a man walking leisurely on a well-known smooth flowery path, under whose feet a sudden earthquake opens a bottomless abyss. But all these reflections on his part Stella was far from divin-

ing. She lingered in the back piazza, and mingling oddly enough with her anger towards Louis, was an indefinite disturbance at her own daring in thinking any ill of him. She felt that to meet him without explaining that she was offended and aggrieved would be a sort of treachery; and yet how was she to speak out her dire suspicions? She was bitterly unhappy, forlorn, and weary; inclined, as the unhappy too often are, to inveigh against all the world. Just then she heard a distant tapping. The instant that faint sound broke the tranquillity of the air, it recalled one of pretty Auntie's songs to her memory, "The woodpecker tapping the hollow beech-tree." She had been gloomy, and coldly hard, ever since leaving Olympia; the new association of ideas gave her the relief of a good fit of crying. "Stella!" said a voice that had never named her before without her responding to it with delight. "My poor child!" went on Louis, taking one of her hands in his.

"I am very unhappy, cousin Louis. You were quite right not to wish me to come to Silver Hill." The moment the words were spoken they were repented of. Louis did not answer immediately; he was not a man whose emotion ever evaporated in words: he was too shy and sensitive for that. He was gazing at Stella keenly, and she saw the twitch in his face that she had learned long ago to recognize as a sign of his intense mental discomfort. "God forgive me, Stella, for any grief I have ever caused you." His voice was like a cry of pain. Though really repentant of her harshness, Stella could not yet show that she was so; she was haunted by that horrible, unspoken jealousy—yes, horrible, it ought never to have had the slightest cause to exist. Louis must have known the nature of Olympia's sentiments for him, and if he did (why did she think an "if" possible), then as he had not altered his behaviour—had cruelly wished to get rid of her to please Olympia—then he was—he must be Olympia's accomplice. After the one glance that had shown her his look of pain and wonder, she had stubbornly kept her eyes turned away from him. "I have made a cruel mistake," went on Louis; "but, Stella, I have been guilty of no treachery." She shrunk all into herself; she who had been wanting to explain for herself would not allow him to do so; she was unaccountably afraid—her passion had vanished suddenly at those few words. She recklessly asked—"What is that noise, cousin Louis? It makes me think of England."

Why had she said that? "I mean it reminds me of Auntie's song of the woodpecker: that was what made me cry?" No answer. Louis was beginning to see clearly into the workings of Stella's mind. She went on more nervously than before. "But woodpeckers are only English birds, are they not?"

"They swarm in our fields of Indian corn, and love decayed cedar-trees. But that is not a woodpecker you hear, Stella. That rapping is the carpenter nailing up Maurice's coffin. The burial must take place at once. I sent for our clergyman, Mr. Eff, early this morning, but he is absent. There is no alternative: I must read the service myself." Tears—soft tears—clouded the eyes she fixed on her cousin now, and she asked humbly, "May I go with you, cousin Louis."

"I sought you for the purpose of begging you to do so. I wished to make sure of one friendly heart, among those I have to meet."

"Oh! thank you, cousin Louis." It was all she could say in the way of asking pardon.

"My good little cousin!" He was gazing abstractedly out of the window, like one who had no purpose in view.

Louis had been blinded, stupefied by the knowledge that had poured in on him with the suddenness and rapidity of a flash of lightning. He was in a state of positive physical, as well as moral distress—aware that he had much to accomplish quickly, or there would be worse in store for him, and yet hindered and impotent like one in a nightmare. Olympia's goodness all a lie; Stella driven from his home; the uselessness of that great sacrifice; Stella now suspecting that he had made a scapegoat of her, to save another from suffering. He wanted to say to that young girl with the valiant grave face, standing by him, "For pity's sake, stay by me! Rescue me from the maze into which I have unwillingly strayed!" But Stella also was tongue-tied by her own sensations. No, no: this was not a moment when these two aching hearts could reveal themselves to one another; and the time is short, very short, that remains to them for giving or receiving confidence, consolation, and pardon. The *Vectis* is to sail the evening before Christmas Day, and this is already the 22nd of December. "Massa!" called a black from below the window.

"Is it time?" asked Louis, starting. Then to Stella—"Now shall we go?" Excepting the bearers of the coffin,

not a negro appeared at the burial ground. Added to the sadness and solemnity of the ceremony, there was a sinister presage in this absence of Maurice's relations and comrades, for the blacks are great sticklers for all observances. It taxed Stella's firmness to repeat the responses distinctly, for she saw more than one heavy tear drop from her cousin's eyes into the loose heap of earth at his feet. Louis remained looking at the newly-filled grave, in the same sort of abstraction as had overtaken him at the piazza window, and Stella waited anxiously by his side. She was afraid to try and speak words of comfort, just as she would have shrunk from touching any bleeding wound. At last, he looked at her, and observing her eyes shining with tears, he said, abruptly, "Stella, can you ever remember my giving you a joy? There! don't answer. Now, then, return good for evil, and say, 'God bless you, cousin Louis!'"

"God bless and preserve you, cousin Louis!" He was turning away, when a nameless fear made her stretch out her hand and seize his arm. "Cousin Louis, where would a letter find you?"

"I shall be back before any letter could reach me."

"Yes, but in case you might be delayed."

"I always go to Miss Hawke's lodging in East Street."

The commonplace words and tone assured her. "Will you ride alone?" she asked again, as he whistled for his horse, Kaled answering the signal by a neigh of pleasure.

"No one will meddle with me, Stella. Keep up the Maman's spirits."

She walked with him to meet his horse, which he had trained to come and go without any groom. She saw him spring into the saddle without using the stirrup, and in spite of daily familiarity, she was struck by his appearance of strength and his fine figure. Stella went to the terrace before the house, and had another view of rider and horse passing the gray rock, the scene of yesterday's tragedy. Only yesterday! and it seemed so long ago. Stella sought the Maman. She was restless, as she had not felt since she had determined to return to England. Impatient also at the confusion of new ideas rushing through her brain—phantoms of possibilities routing away all the impressions and sentiments of the last few weeks. Who has not known what it is to be haunted by a shadowy something that is to interfere with the fulfilment of some dreaded event? Stella presently

stopped her pacing up and down of the room. She sat herself down where she had seen Louis sit in the morning, and she also laid her head on Mrs. Gautier's knee. "Maman, will you be good to me, and say some of your pretty verses? Put your hand, Maman, on my head, and take away my irritation." The old lady passed her hand softly over the waves of the girl's hair, as she repeated those lines of Spenser, beginning—

"All in the power of their great Maker lie.

All creatures must obey the voice of the Most High."

CHAP. XLIV.—THE TWENTY-SECOND OF DECEMBER.

At the hour for tea, Olympia joined Mrs. Gautier and Stella. She sat, as was her custom, at a little table, with her reading lamp and book. The only thing about her which indicated any consciousness of a change, was a shortness of speech and a brusquerie very unusual; for Olympia possessed in a high degree that manner which the French designate under the word *aimable*; no one more gifted with the talent of paying little attentions, and of making them show to the best advantage. This evening she neither trimmed the Maman's lamp nor offered to arrange her knitting for her. It was in vain that Stella tried to imitate the composure of her companions; every slight noise made her start. When for, perhaps, the twentieth time, she had run into the piazza, Olympia asked impatiently, "What or who are you expecting, Stella?"

"I don't know. I can't tell what is the matter with me; but every instant I fancy I hear some one creeping about in the piazza."

"The rustle of falling leaves," said Olympia.

"There!" cried Stella, jumping up again.

"A bat disturbed by the light." Olympia rose as she made this answer, and looked into the piazza. "It is to be hoped you are not going to set up as a rival to Miss Portia Lowe, in seeing visions and dreaming dreams."

"I am sorry to be so teasing," said Stella, trying to sit quiet.

"Let us take a turn on the terrace," proposed Mrs. Gautier; "come with us, Olympia," she added kindly.

The night seemed only a gentler day; the dark blue sky

studded with stars, shining in bright rivalry to the moon, now so near its setting that it seemed hovering over the jagged summit of the far-off mountains, looking by that light more a gray mass of clouds than solid earth. The land wind had not yet come down from those sublime heights; not a breath of air sighed in the trees, nor whispered in the leaves of the oleanders and orange-trees. This unusual stillness had not varied since the hour that Stella had remarked it, when listening to the hammering of the carpenter fastening Maurice's coffin. The three women walked slowly and silently up and down in front of the house, each occupied with her own thoughts. The lower edge of the moon dipped behind the mountain, and instantly, as if kindled by the touch, a narrow, high, dark red flame shot up against the pure sky: another rose to the right—to the left—a chain of fires. In horrible expectation, the three beings on that platform waited for the next revelation of what at once they knew to be the signal of rebellion. They had not long to wait. Up from the foot of the hill on which they stood, came rolling a luminous smoke, its highest curl glittering with sparks, until it suddenly broke forth into a wide sheet of flame. There was no sky, no stars, nothing of heaven to be seen now. More lurid smoke, myriads more of sparks, another and another sheet of lurid flame. The coffee walks, with their rich, ripe crop, are on fire—so is the mill, the pulping house, the sick house, the stables. Hark to the shrill neighing and shrieks of mules, horses, and cattle! Something more appalling mingles and rises above the cry of animal pain: the shout of human beings full of hatred, envy, and revenge; the wild laugh of savage joy over destruction; the wilder song of savage triumph. It is come at last—the inevitable, fatal moment for the struggle between the oppressing and the oppressed. Hear what they sing; it is their *Marseillaise*—the song their fathers had sung through Kingston streets in 1799.

“One, two, tree,
All de same.
Black, white, brown,
All de same,
All de same.
One, two, tree.”

“Oh, Maman!” whispered Stella, throwing her arms round Mrs. Gautier, “thank God, Louis is safe!”

“The fire will be seen miles round,” observed Olympia:

"we shall soon have help. If we could only hide ourselves for an hour."

Mrs. Gautier shook her head. "Impossible ! where can you hide on this rock ? Every side inaccessible, but the one where the road is."

"Hush ! they are coming, they are coming," cried Olympia, catching at Stella's gown. The song was changed now.

"Jackass, wid him long tail
And bag of coffee coming down, } bis.
You dar worry me,
You dar teazy me,
You make my Sambo dandy leave me."

That was screeched by women's voices : this by men's :—

"John Crosstree was a dandy, oh !
Hi ! me dandy, ho ! my dandy."

Nearer, yet nearer, and the shouts grew more meaning :

"Earie, Earie, Earie, Miss Lympia, na ma qua,
She kill de black man, massa kill de Sambo,
Dey both as sweet as sugar candy, hi-oigh."

"They are coming to kill me," muttered Olympia through her chattering teeth. The allusions were clear to Denniston's death—to Maurice's—alas ! both to be traced to her.

"Let us go to the back of the house !" dragging at Stella.

"They will find us directly," said the Maman, with wonderful composure : "any show of fear will make them worse."

"Stand behind me, Olympia. I have never offended any of them." Stella placed herself in front of the terrified woman.

Waving lighted torches, blowing conch-shells and cow-horns, beating tom-toms, singing hymns, screeching ribald songs, up the zigzag path, rushing, leaping, brandishing grass-knives and hoes, came a multitude of negroes of both sexes. They spring up the house steps, clamber in at every window, they spread themselves round the house. So dense the number in that small space, so thick the air with the smoke from a hundred torches, that the three ladies at first escaped notice. Peals of laughter echo through the chambers of the pretty dwelling ; tables, chairs, books, clothing, are tossed out among those outside ; figures more like apes than aught else are dancing about dressed in Gautier's white shirts, in the ladies' dresses and bonnets. The air is rent with whoopings, guttural screams, with all the various furious cries of licence and thirst of vengeance.

"Ye mad debils;" shouted a woman, "ye no carie de red-coats a coming, dem swords clashing, dem guns firing."

"We make bonfire light 'em on de way," bawled out a wag, setting fire to the light curtains, while torches were thrown hither and thither at hap-hazard. The dry wood of the jalousies, of the walls, of the flooring, caught like tinder.

"Hoorah! Hoorah! Hi—oigh!"

The mighty blaze showed the ladies to the furious mob—the shouts ceased, and the rebels stood motionless, only for a very few seconds. What feeling caused that silence—that panic? The feeling that the wild beast has for its keeper? or some of man's better instincts towards the weak—the helpless? God knows! A new incident set the whole swarm of blacks in motion again. Some of them had driven up an ox which had escaped from the burning stables; the poor animal was thrown alive into the burning house.

"Fine rossbeef. Christmas beef, marm," said one fellow, pushing up to Mrs. Gautier.

"Hi! Massa say, niggers work 'xcellent well. Coffee aal aff de bush marning come."

Loud laughter welcomed these words; they broke the spell: first came bitter sarcasm, then a pelting with insulting language; the worst passions were in the ascendant; the men pressed on the ladies; they were almost suffocated and blinded by the heat, the smell, and the smoke. "Keep heart, young missus," whispered Rebecca's voice in Stella's ear. "Lookie dere! soger offisher."

Stella did look, and saw by the light of the fire the unexpected apparition of a giant clad in a red coat, with golden wings, his mighty arm uplifted and dealing blows, right and left, with his sheathed sword, on the heads about and beneath him. Was this the god Mars himself, or Telamonian Ajax? The giant has rapidly cleared a space about himself. He is standing with his eye-glass fixed in his eye, taking a cool survey of the scene. Lesser giants are whacking about them, and many broken black crowns are the consequence. Stella could not mistake those goggle eyes, that snub nose, the half-open mouth. "Tom! Tom Hubbard! come and help us!" she screamed.

"Hallo! who's that?" returns the giant. That cry of Stella's had recalled the blacks to their certain prey. Once more there was a tossing of men and women; a multitude of them surround the half-dozen red-jackets; the odds are too

many. "Fire!" cries the officer at last, but he is fighting his own way to where the ladies are, by dint of muscular strength; he deals heavy blows with his sheathed sword. It is not in such an ignoble struggle he will fling the scabbard away! Stella almost touches him; she reaches out her hand; a stout black makes a snatch at Olympia; with all the energy of despair Olympia clutches at Stella, hangs on to her, twines her arms about her; the two women are forced back—back—further and further from their deliverer; the jerk with which the black lifted Olympia in his arms sends Stella reeling; the earth sinks away from under her feet. She is falling fast—faster—down the most precipitous side of Silver Hill. She did not lose her senses; she knew her danger—was aware that below her lay sharp rocks, and below them again, a deep, stony gully, and that she was out of all human aid. Countless thoughts course through her brain; on and on she slips—slides—cannot catch at one of the jutting rocks; the stones roll from beneath her and carry her down, until with a great shock she falls into the middle of some large bush. Bruised, nearly stunned, she laid fast hold of its branches, quite conscious enough to fear to move, lest she might be sent on a precipitate flight to the abyss below. The first effort Stella made was to say aloud the Lord's prayer; she wanted to steady her mind; she could have declared she heard the ticking of half-a-dozen watches round her—it was the pulses of her own head. She cannot pray; her thoughts wander; she sees the Maman with her long, floating, white hair; she must be growing crazy, for she is sure that Tom Hubbard was near her when she lost her footing. Tom Hubbard! how could he be at Silver Hill? She ventures to open her eyes; she wants to see some reality; it is dark—not a sound breaks the utter stillness. All at once she fancies she hears a stone fall, fancies blacks gliding like serpents towards her; she tightens her hold of the saving shrub, and tries once more to pray; if she could get rid of those whirling, fiery, red spots that dance before her! What is that? Two sharp, loud reports of a gun ring through the air; Stella answers them with a long scream, and then listens painfully, but no other sound came. Something cold glides over her neck—her flesh creeps with a new horror, and then she guesses it must be a lizard, and thankfully remembers that Louis had told her—it seems very long ago—that there were no venomous reptiles in Jamaica. Ah! poor cousin Louis! the thought

of him brings back full consciousness ; her bosom heaves as if it would burst with her quick sobs. Her thought of him becomes a prayer—a real prayer ; not a multitude of words, but a silent heart-prayer for mercy to him, strength for him. Staring into the darkness, she prayed on and on till the deep shadows began at last to pale before the coming dawn ; a chill air made the leaves of Stella's refuge tremulous ; a faint twitter of birds, and then a tender yellow light came and chased away the gray of night. It is a new morning. Stella sees now that she has been saved by a large ginesta or Spanish broom, "that lover of solitary, deserted places," rooted in the cleft of a rock. No more shrubs beneath where she lay ; nothing but gray rocks, with surfaces like the teeth of some gigantic saw, looking as if hurled down there in wrath, stood between her and an unseen depth. She must not trust herself with another glance in that direction. She turns her face upwards ; nothing but rocks tossed pell-mell, with one narrow stony channel between some of them, and down which had she rolled ; a little to the left, or to the right, she must have been dashed on those bristling projections, that set her trembling even to look at. There is a heavy flap of wings close above her head ; and she recognizes that large, hideous bird, with black body, bald head, and red throat, called by the negroes John Crow—the chief attendant on death, the scavenger of the island. Another and another flap slowly by her. New terrors begin to frame themselves—it is so lonely around her, now these unclean birds have sailed out of sight. Does every one believe her dead ? Are they seeking her crushed limbs in the ravine, or have all her friends fallen victims ?

Stella fears to move ; she fears to stay. A tiny something, dazzling bright in the first rays of the sun, whirrs fearlessly across her face. It is "the least of the winged vagrants of the sky." To Stella the lovely little creature comes like the dove to the patriarch of old. She revives at the sight of his beauty—she watches his manœuvres among the bright yellow blossoms of her ginesta. For a second or two he poises himself so steadily that she almost loses sight of his wings, but she sees his eye glancing with quick vigilance ere he thrusts his long tongue into the flowers. With one happy chirp he darts away, his glossy green back and red collar flashing in her eyes as he passed.

There he is, a yard or two above her, a little to one side,

dressing his smart plumage on the dry branch of a straggling wild coffee sapling, which Stella had not remarked before. Laying herself with her face to the hill side, she drew herself up towards the little beauty. Another chirp—this time of defiance—and away again; he is greedy, for now he forgets her, to hover over a wreath of the purple bells of the *fior di notte*—she lays fast hold of the bind-weed. Whenever Stella nears the tiny fellow, he is always off again with a merry chirp; but stay! the low, significant whistle of human lips distracts her attention, and she loses sight of her fairy guide. “Hallo! I say,” exclaimed a well-remembered high treble voice. Stella does not hesitate now to raise her head—she meets the anxious, eager gaze of a pair of goggle eyes, in one of which is inserted an eye-glass. The owner’s long length must have been lying prone on the earth to bring his good-natured bull-dog face into the unusual position in which it fronted Stella’s upturned eyes.

“Tom! is that really you?” cries Stella, in a weak, broken voice.

“Is that a really flesh and blood Stella Joddrell? Tang mieux, as mamma used to say. Now don’t go to try to stand up. Creep nearer—nearer yet. Now catch that!” and he threw her one end of his military sash; “tie it round you—make it fast somehow, for I am going to haul you up by it. Don’t be in a fright: you’re as safe as if you were in a church.” There were no flowers, no shrubs, no humming birds now; within six feet of the terrace the hill was almost as sheer and as smooth as the side of a house.

“Are they all safe, Tom?” asks Stella, breathlessly, as he puts out one of his large hands and catches hold of her.

“All as right as a trivet!”

As soon as the friendly young giant got a firm grasp of her, he dragged her up on to the platform, and for a minute or two stood contemplating the forlorn, dishevelled, ragged figure with great contentment. He holds her two lacerated hands in his, and his pressure is like that of a vice; he coughs, clears his throat, tries to laugh, and does not; at last he literally bolts out—“By Jove! Never was so glad in my born days. I thought you were done for. I *am* glad—and what a go, Stella! ‘Ours’ only landed in Kingston the day before yesterday, and I had as much idea that you were one of the people we were sent to help as that it was the Pope of Rome.”

"And every one is really safe, Tom?"

"Oh, yes! the ladies are safe enough: a plucky old chap took 'em away with him—a militia colonel. I stayed to look for you, but we didn't know which side to look. It all turned out for the best that we hadn't gone away, for—for, Stella—I say—no need, you know, to put yourself in a fright——" He stopped.

"What is it, Tom?"

"A—a—a—a, he—he—he—he has only fainted, you know."



CHAP. XLV.—A DOUBLE SHOT.

THE last words came out glibly; for Stella had pushed Tom Hubbard aside, and seen at a glance what threatened to make a tragical end of her personal history. Cousin Louis was stretched on the ground, his head resting on the knee of the sergeant left to keep guard with the big lieutenant. Stella threw herself down by her cousin's side. Her lips opened wide; you saw the effort to shriek, but no sound came. If it had formed itself into words, it would have been—"Oh! pray, God, take me too—if he must die, let me die—pray—pray!" Her eyes strain so on to Louis's face, that the soldier, O'Halloran, says compassionately, "Miss, you see he has been shot in two places—he ain't no ways dead."

"Yes," said Tom; "up here he came at a tearing gallop—stared at the burning house, and us—no one else here, you know—never spoke a word, but just dropped off his horse—where you see him, of course. I knew him again directly, and thought, 'It's quite natural, old boy, you shouldn't like what you see overmuch,'—but we hadn't an idea he had been shot, till he told us himself."

Stella's tongue clove to the roof of her mouth; she raised the dark hair off Louis's cold moist brow, on which was printed the dent of mortal anguish; she bends her cheek close to his blue lips, to feel if he still breathes.

"Oh! *do* help him—don't let him die, Tom!—don't let him die!" Tom actually blubbered like a child. "Perhaps," says O'Halloran, "Miss can say where there be a doctor."

"Yes—yes, good man—there's a doctor close by."

"I'll go for him," says Tom.

"If it be nigh hand, sir," with a military salute, "we might carry the gentleman there," suggests the sergeant.

"Those black devils haven't left a plank or a shutter to carry even a baby on," exclaimed Tom.

"We'll do it with the sashes, sir," the hand going to the head again, with mechanical precision. They form a kind of hammock of their red sashes, and slip it under Louis. The sergeant is an old soldier; not a chance nor an expedient escapes him. "The gentleman's horse is close by, sir; I hear him making a noise just a while since. He would carry the young lady, case we has to ford the river."

"How the doose dō you think we are to catch him?" asked Tom.

Louis's whistle was still hanging to one of his button-holes; without a word, Stella took it, and imitated, as well as she could, her cousin's call to his horse. Almost before she had ceased, the fine animal came trotting up the road.

"Kaled!" called Stella; but Kaled did not hearken to her; he went up to his master, sniffed at the prostrate body, whinnying pitifully.

"By George, he's a brick," exclaimed Tom, in a transport of admiration, as he seized the bridle. Stella, the most timid of women with horses, put her arm round Kaled's neck, kissed him with a sob, and allowed Tom to lift her on to the man's saddle.

"Hold fast by his mane, and don't jerk his mouth, and you'll do," said Tom.

The officer and soldier raised the wounded man, Louis's eyes opened for a moment, and fell on Stella's face of anguish; he tried to smile—tried to speak.

"Don't speak, cousin Louis, don't; I am not frightened; we are going to take you to Dr. McNiel." He had closed his eyes again, and she doubted whether he had understood her. The high-blooded Kaled bore his helpless rider down the steep road with a care quite human; she was indeed fearlessly indifferent: in her heart there was only room for one great terror.

Luckily more than a month had elapsed since the rains, and the river had had time to shrink back nearly into its narrowest channel. The road to Dr. McNiel's went through the yard of Miss Portia's golden-turreted dwelling; Louis's bearers were dropping with fatigue.

"Suppose we rest here," said Tom, his face like the Red Lion of Brentford. No clatter of negro tongues, no cackling of poultry, no barking of dogs, greet the party. All is silent as the grave, the jalousies are most of them on the ground, one or two still hang loosely on one hinge, the turrets (Miss Portia's glory), that the hurricane had spared, have vanished; the white walls are stained and cracked; it is no longer a home, it is a sorrowful, forsaken dwelling; and where was good aunt Portia herself? Kaled felt Stella shaking in the saddle, and sidled up to the house to find a prop for his burden.

"We'll take Gautier in here, Stella," says Tom, sweat-drops raining off his brow; "it will be a shelter from the sun, and I'll go on for your doctor." Louis was carried into what had been Miss Portia's sitting-room; most of the furniture was broken or gone; but Stella, who had slipped down from Kaled's back, found a bedstead, and on it a mattress of mat leaves, and on this Louis was laid.

"Any better, old fellow?" asks Tom, fixing his eye-glass. "I am Tom Hubbard, you know, of the 110th Blanks; don't you remember me?"

"Best go for the docthor, sir," said O'Halloran.

"Dr. McNiel does not live far from this," said Stella; "it's quite a straight road; and if he is away, do find him, Tom."

Lieutenant Hubbard put his long legs across Kaled and galloped off. The sergeant went out to seek for some water—not only to drink, but to wash away the mask of gun-powder, dirt, and perspiration which covered his face. It is a relief to Stella to be left quiet by the side of the wounded man. How passive he continues. As long as she does not look at him, she can hope; she kneels at the foot of the bed and lays her head on his feet. That touch has stirred life in Louis: he calls her—"Stella! Come nearer to me." She obeyed. Do not be so afraid, Stella:" he once more closes his eyes.

"I am not afraid, cousin Louis. I am not afraid," in a would-be firm voice. "I am only a little anxious, very anxious——" the voice quivered away to nothing. He did not try to speak again; she could be sure by the trembling of his eyelids alone that he was conscious. Presently Sergeant O'Halloran put in his head and nodded to her, meaning to signify that he saw some one coming. The

sharp trot of horses announced the fact directly afterwards. When Dr. McNiel entered the room where the cousins were, the first words he said, as Stella rose from her knees to meet him, were—"You had better leave us alone, Miss Joddrell." O'Halloran was leaning against the door-post as she stepped out. He lifted his cap, standing bare-headed and in the act to speak, but she took no notice of him at first, walking up and down restlessly before the window of the room where lay Louis. She was listening for any sound of pain: then all at once she asked, "Where is Mr. Hubbard?"

"The liftenant is gone on to t'other place, me lady—Cedar Valley; it ain't brunt at all, me lady." Then Stella remembered that possibility, but her thoughts wandered away again directly.

"There's a lad comed with the docthor that knows all about it, me lady."

"Who is come, do you say?"

A young negro lad, who had been informing O'Halloran of Stella's dignity as the lady of Cedar Valley, now came sheepishly forward, holding the doctor's mule.

"I cannot listen to you," said Stella, feeling sick and giddy, for the momentary relief given by the doctor's arrival was gone, and fear was again uppermost. "Perhaps they want you," she went on to the sergeant; "go in and see." O'Halloran put on his cap and obeyed.

"Young missus," began the black boy, "Cedar Valley Rebecca tell me tell young missus that old Missy Gautier and Miss 'Lympia deys all safe in great house dere." Stella heard as one hears in the very moment of dropping off into sleep. She is eagerly intent upon something else—on the doctor's voice. It is coming nearer and nearer: now it is at her very ear, but she does not look towards him. "How is he to be moved?" she inquired, in a thick voice.

"I told the young officer to go to Cedar Valley, and send us plenty of men with a light bedstead with curtains and a mattress," replied Dr. McNiel in a cheerful matter-of-fact voice: he understood very well how to help her to maintain her composure. "These gun-shot wounds," he resumed, "are plaguey things; the ball may take such a devious course; the shot in the leg doesn't signify." Dr. McNiel did not mention the really serious one in the back of the neck. "He has been fired at twice, and from behind; but he is young, and

not too young, and of temperate habits: so with good nursing I daresay we shall do very well, in spite of lying in the dew a *leetle* too long. Stella bowed her head for all answer. Dr. McNiel brought her a little ether and water from his medicine chest. Presently she says, "You do not think my cousin in danger? You would tell me the truth, wouldn't you?"

"Of course, I am honest in saying I think we shall do very well. I wish the meeting with his mother were over."

"Oh! poor Maman!" and now the long pent-up tears rained down the cheeks flushed to burning red with constrained emotion. "You need not be afraid, doctor; the Maman is so brave, and never thinks of herself."

"I know she is all excellence; if any one might have hoped for immunity from their slaves, it ought to have been Mrs. Gautier and Miss Lowe."

"What has become of aunt Portia, doctor?"

"She is one of the refugees at Cedar Valley, Miss Joddrell; not a negro stirred on your property; that half-crazed girl Rebecca frightened them into keeping quiet. She declared she saw your poor father in his flannel dressing-gown, with the two babies in his arms, flying from one end of the plantation to the other."

"How very dreadful, doctor!"

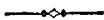
"Not so dreadful as what has been actually enacting elsewhere. More than fifty properties were blazing at midnight, and there's been cruelties and bloodshed on both sides. Colonel Bagshot on his return from the inquest got a warning, probably from Rebecca, and sent at once to the commander-in-chief for assistance, but what could a handful of soldiers do against thousands. Your overseer, Mr. Boggis, was out with the militia and is wounded; and there's a report of a white man lying dead near the Silver Hill negro houses; not a black will touch the body, and the whites have too much on their hands in watching the living to look after the dead."

Stella shuddered. "Those wretches who fired at my cousin made sure, I daresay, that they had killed him also."

"Ah! Miss Joddrell, when we are judging these blacks, let us remember that we cannot escape from the pitiless logic of cause and effect. Those who sow the whirlwind will reap the tempest—they and their children's children. All our actions, political or private, show by their results, Miss Stella, whether there be any taint at their root."

Stella hung her head at this rebuke, and Dr. McNiel adding,

"Live and let live is both safe policy and sound morality," went back to his patient. As soon as it was possible to expect it, a score of Cedar Valley negroes appeared with the bedstead and mattress : Tom Hubbard had gone forward to order. Miss Portia's splendid new sedan, now sadly battered, and its bright colours dimmed and soiled, was sent for Stella's use. How tenderly those blacks carried Mr. Gautier along the rough path, hewn through rocks ! they did not pick their way : many a stone bruised, many a thorn pricked their naked feet : not one even so much as winced, for fear of shaking their helpless burden. Yet these very negroes had with difficulty refrained from joining the rebellious crews of the night before. The West Indian black, with his apathetic intelligence and keen sensations, receives every external impression with avidity. Easily inflamed, easily terrified, easily subjugated, even with few humanizing influences, he nevertheless shows himself more gentle and affectionate, and perhaps less cruel in his fury, than any belonging to other races. The faces of Mr. Gautier's bearers were puckered into that peculiar pouting grimace which with negroes betokens sorrow and compassion. It was well on towards noon, the intense light of the sun making the sky look white, when the mournful cavalcade turned the garden of Cedar Valley Great House. In the porch stood Mrs. Gautier, a *mater dolorosa*, indeed : the wounded man was her only son, and she was a widow. Louis was carried into the largest bedroom ; the mother, the doctor, and the absolutely necessary attendants alone passed in with them. As the door closed on Louis, Stella shivered all over ; she put out her hands to steady herself, for she felt the earth whirling round with her. Luckily, Tom Hubbard was close enough to catch hold of her. "I 'bieve the young lady be a dying for hunger," said O'Halloran, who felt himself starving:



CHAP. XLVI.—CONFLICT.

Is it necessary formally to state that Stella did not sail in the *Vectis* ? Olympia had had the courage to remind that pale troubled creature, wandering to and fro in the house and out of it—standing beneath the window of the room where lay Louis to catch at every sound, and then at the slightest moan

of pain, rushing wildly into the plantation—Olympia had had the courage to remind her that her passage was taken, and to ask if she had given up her intention of returning to England. For a long period Dr. McNiel rides daily through the avenue of trees, from which Stella's inheritance is named. Yet, in all his visits to the Great House, the doctor had never seen the young lady, its mistress, since the morning he and she had brought Mr. Gautier thither. Madame Olympia had been the only one of the three ladies at Cedar Valley who had performed the honours of the house to him. To her he had spoken out all the doubts and fears his mind harboured, and that he carefully hid from the piteous-looking mother. Madame Olympia knew that Gautier might not live; and that if life itself were spared, his health would never be restored. "He is unconscious," confided the doctor, "that he has had a stroke of paralysis—very slight, it is true, but a sad fact. What a contradiction it is to try so desperately to preserve a man's life, when the result must be pain and poverty." Stella had no courage to be present at the long conversations which were held between Olympia and Dr. McNiel; for, after his first visit, she had been driven almost frantic by Olympia's explanations of the doctor's reasons for and against Louis's recovery. Once had been enough; Stella preferred house-keeper Manie's statements, given with sighs and groans, to the doctor's professional cheerfulness or professional gloom. Besides, she did not like Dr. McNiel: she had long since discovered a want of cordiality in his manner to Mr. Gautier.

One day as the doctor was jogging quietly along on his favourite mule, it started violently, and nearly pitched the Jamaica Esculapius over its head. A tall, thin, white-clothed figure stood in the path. "Soh, soh, Poll! Ah, Miss Jod-drell! no wonder poor Polly's eyes were dazzled; there's a saying that the best of mules is sure to play a shabby trick once in its life. You have heard of the man who rode the same mule for twenty years without an accident. In gratitude he had its skeleton hung up in his dining-hall, and one day down it fell and crushed him. It doesn't do to despise old sayings." Stella had been waiting for the doctor far out of sight of the windows of the house. Day after day she had seen him come and go, with a sickening heart, and every night the Maman had kissed and blessed her, but not till the last evening had she heard one hopeful word of Louis's state; then the Maman said, "He is much easier." This was how it was that Stella

took courage to waylay the doctor, but far from Olympia's keen ears and eyes. With a poor attempt to smile at his story, Stella abruptly asked the same question she had put on the morning at Miss Portia's desolate house. "Will he recover now?"

"Indeed, and I believe he will," answered Dr. McNiel; "indeed, I may venture to say he is out of danger; a little lameness and debility, perhaps, but his life is safe."

"Thank you," said Stella, and left him.

The doctor went along with something additional to ponder on; he thinks a good deal about the family at Cedar Valley. Stella took her way to the river side, where she had sat with Louis the morning of the obi, the morning which had seen the first act of the Cedar Valley tragedy. Very often Stella has sought this same spot—has stayed there for hours, tossing into the bubbling water the leaves and blossoms growing within her reach, her business apparently to watch with half-closed eyes their eddying movements. She was not thinking of them, however, though they were so lovely and sweet, though among them were those "Larksheels which in the middle of carnations and gillyflowers make a delicate tussiemussie, or nosegay, both for scent and smell."* Infinite combinations of the same thoughts and memories occupied her, just as from the same colours of the weeds she played with, she might have painted the countless variety of tints in nature. It was there she again heard cousin Louis's voice as she had heard it at the gray rock on the terrace, on the only occasions when they had spoken one to the other out of the fulness of their hearts. There had been more of discord than of harmony between them, more of struggle than of peace; yet the echo of those dialogues had an ineffable charm for Stella. She is thinking now, for the first time since the 22nd of December, of the future. Louis out of danger—Louis going to resume his place in the family. What have been his feelings on hearing that Olympia is a widow?—for it is so indeed. Mr. Smythe, or Smith, was found dead on the road leading up to Silver Hill. His hand still lay on a double-barrelled gun by his side, and both barrels bore traces of having been lately discharged. The body showed no marks of violence. Upon careful investigation it was proved that the cause of death had not been external. The slender thread of a worn life had been snapped suddenly by the emotions of that fearful night. The

* Parkinson's "Paradise."

stranger was decently interred in the churchyard of Mr. Eff's little church. The only mourner, Tom Hubbard, who observed "that apparently he had come to Jamaica just in the nick of time to make himself generally useful and agreeable."

"Why not four-and-twenty hours sooner?" had questioned Olympia's troubled mind, when she was told of the occurrence. Why not? because retribution is a sleuth-hound that never loses scent of our mistakes, our errors, our crimes, and comes up to us just as we think ourselves safest, and drags us to the ground.

In those long interviews between Dr. McNiell and Olympia, remarked on by Stella, the doctor had made known a suspicion that weighed on his mind. He had compared the bullets extracted from Mr. Gautier's wound with some found in Mr. Smythe's pocket: they were exactly similar.

"Had Mr. Gautier ever mentioned how he received his wounds?" asked the agitated Olympia.

"No more allusion than this:—He had reached the half-way tree, when he met an overseer riding for bare life to Kingston, who called to him that the negroes were setting fire to all the properties, and killing every white. He had galloped back, was shot close to Silver Hill, and he believed he owed his life only to Kaled's swiftness and courage."

Madame Olympia entreated Dr. McNiell to keep his suspicions a secret. She alluded to her present situation, painful enough, but which would become intolerable were it even surmised that she had been the cause which nerved her husband's hand to take Mr. Gautier's life. She could never face Mrs. Gautier again, nor Stella, on whom she was now entirely dependent, and who was not too well inclined towards Madame Olympia. Everybody knows how fast and far confidence goes when there is any secret between two persons. Madame Olympia did not tell the doctor that she had done her best by unkind innuendo and hypocritical advice to force Stella to sail in the *Vectis*, and that words had passed between them on that occasion which women rarely forgive—and never forget.

It was one morning early in May that Mrs. Gautier said to Stella, "You will see Louis this afternoon." Unseen herself, Stella watched her cousin being assisted into the large dining-hall. She tried to get a glimpse of his face, but in vain; she will go round by the porch, and then she can wear her large hat; she cannot help shrinking from the interview. Another five minutes and she is by the invalid's side. He is lying on

the large sofa drawn across the east window; the couch has been placed there, because the light falls softened through a screen of trees. Louis held out his hand to Stella as soon as he caught sight of her figure, turning his wan face eagerly to hers. She clasped his hand firmly, but she could not look at him. "I am so glad, cousin Louis——" her heart leapt up and cut short her words.

"You look well and happy," he said, with an expression of surprise, and disappointed surprise, in his eyes at the glorious beauty before him. The bright colour emotion had called into her cheeks made her quite unlike the pale, drooping girl he had pictured to himself. Would not cousin Louis's danger banish the roses from cousin Stella's cheeks and lips, and deaden the lustre of her eyes? However, it takes a long time ere sorrow prints indelible marks on a young face; but had Louis glanced at Stella a quarter of an hour later, he would have thought her pale enough. How quickly her ear discerned in the tone of Louis's voice something amiss. She gazed at him then, and the purple light faded from her countenance. On his brow the shadow of death still lingered; his coal-black hair was lavishly besprinkled with gray; his fine active form shrunken and helpless. "Dearer, dearer, far dearer thus," was the wild cry of her soul, repressed on her trembling lips. Louis had dropped her hand, laid back his head on the pillow, and closed his eyes. She could trace every vein in their large lids, and she stood there gathering into her heart of hearts every sign of his suffering—the sunken temples, the cheek tight to the bone, the colourless lips.

Louis was not cured. Dr. Mc Niel was trifling with them all. Reader, have you ever trembled for a life dearer than your own—ever contemplated the sharp outlines of beloved features; the eyes drawn backwards into the sockets; and, gazing on the transparent skin of face and hands, been able quite to believe the man of science who assures you that all danger is past? Have not cold moistures broken out on your brow, and unbidden, unbanishable fears chilled the marrow of your bones, and driven sleep from your nights and tranquillity from your days?

Stella had no room in her mind for conjectures as to the impression she had made on Louis. She was far from any idea that the glow, which happiness at again seeing him had spread over her, had jarred his sensitive nature. Mrs. Gautier sat on one of the high, old-fashioned chairs that were ranged

against the wall. In the air of her whole person, though she was busy knitting, there was that peculiar shade of unsettledness one remarks in travellers stopping at an inn, even when they engage in one of their usual home occupations. The Maman's very seat, taken at random, near neither to table nor window, nor yet isolated enough to afford room for gathering round her either work-basket or books, was characteristic of one who feels herself a passenger. Aunt Portia was shut up in her sedan-chair, seeing visions or sleeping, at all events retired from public view. Stella would have given worlds to know how Louis and Olympia had met. Within reach of Mr. Gautier's sofa was the widow Smith or Smythe, in black bombazeen, but without weeds, reading an English newspaper, her brow as smooth, as serene, as that of a happy, sleeping infant.

Dr. McNeil's entrance broke the palpable silence. He felt his patient's pulse, then began retailing the news of the day. The island was relieved from martial law, the West Indian mercantile body had presented the Colonial Secretary with a protest against the Orders in Council of 1831, those orders which the people of Jamaica accused of having caused the late insurrection. The Ministers had agreed to grant a committee for inquiry: and in the meantime the orders were actually suspended.

"There is only one reasonable thing to do now," said Louis.

"And that is?" asked the doctor.

"To grant immediate emancipation, doctor. The slaves have been forced into thinking for themselves; mere ameliorations in the condition of the negroes will not answer any longer. Either the severest restrictions, doctor, or full and entire liberty; half a dozen more years of half measures and Jamaica is ruined." How strange to hear Louis's voice in calm discussion. To Stella it was as though she were dreaming.

"It's well the folks down yonder do not hear you," replied Dr. McNeil. "They are mad on the question. Treason, Rebellion, America, St. Domingo, anything rather than Emancipation."

"There is no moral unity among us," replied Louis, "so we are sure of coming off losers. For years I have seen the worse than uselessness of endeavouring to compromise matters between immediate material interest and conscience. It is like milking a he-goat into a sieve—nothing remained of nothing. I shall try and play well the only part for which I

am now fit, that of a wearied spectator of the fulfilment of our general ruin."

The doctor was one of those persons who like to lay aside a subject on which there may be a difference of opinion. So without answering, he turned his professional gaze on the ladies, and startled every one present by exclaiming—"Miss Joddrell, I must take you in hand: what have you been doing to yourself?"

"I am quite well, I assure you," said Stella, shortly.

"What!" he had hold of her wrist. "Well? with your pulse in a racing gallop! if you contradict me again, I'll order you to England by next packet."

Stella laughed. "Indeed, doctor, there is nothing the matter with me. I have been out too long in the sun, perhaps."

"You had better lay some embargo on Stella's long walks and rides," observed Olympia. "She is sometimes out nearly the whole day."

"Ride!" exclaimed Louis; "that is a new habit, is it not? Do you venture out alone?"

Before Stella could vouch that her only rides were on Sunday to church, the doctor, as if there was some affinity in his mind between Miss Joddrell's rides and the tall lieutenant, said—"By-the-by, I have not met Mr. Hubbard here for some time."

"He scarcely ever comes; but after the arrival of letters and newspapers from England," said the Maman. "The young gentleman has been full of thoughtful attention for you, my son," she added, turning towards Mr. Gautier.

"Very tall young man, that," observed the doctor to Louis. "Very."

"Not so tall as a man I once saw," cried Miss Portia, putting her head forth from her sedan. "Miss Joddrell, will you remind me to measure the top of Mr. Hubbard's thumb the next time he pays us a visit. The man I mean had a thumb with a top exactly the size of a crown piece."

For months after this, life at Cedar Valley moved with a desperate regularity. At the same hour, the noon of each day, Louis was helped to his sofa; at the same hour, that of sunset, he retired to his own room. He passed the intermediate time on the large couch, surrounded by, nay, nearly covered with newspapers—his great interest in life seemed to be newspapers—and Stella's first exercise of power as mistress

of the house was to gratify this taste of cousin Louis. Tom Hubbard, instigated by her, sent up the newspapers and magazines received by his regiment, and every island paper was regularly to be found day after day on the reading table, placed conveniently within Mr. Gautier's reach.

Louis never refused to converse, though he seldom took the initiative. It was perfectly evident that he wished to avoid all discussions of the catastrophe at Silver Hill; it would have seemed, indeed, from what he had said to Dr. McNiel, that he considered his game of life played out; he was like one without hope or fear. The object of general care and attention, he was gentle and complying, the only proof he could give of grateful feeling, and heaven knows what it must have cost him, a man once so independent in every personal habit, to be waited on as if he were a helpless infant. For at times he was so, when certain states of the atmosphere produced paroxysms of rheumatic agony. The hours he had passed lying an inert mass exposed to a heavy dew, had added this trial to the effects of his wounds. Olympia was a fixture in the general sitting-room. Louis never repulsed her attentions, but he never called on her for assistance. The person whose attendance he preferred was clearly the negress Manie, the housekeeper at Cedar Valley for the third generation of Joddrells. Appearances were tranquil within the Great House; but there was more than an absence of all cordiality, there was isolation of feeling as well as cold formality among the indwellers, that removed them only a very few degrees from a community of Trappists. It was not, however, only the dulness of a certain fixed routine, it was rather to be compared to the lull which, whether in external nature or in the inner life of man, interrupts for a short time a tempest.

For a while Stella lived in nervous dread of her cousin expressing that wish, which flutters when it does not actually terrify; for lives there the human being, even with the clearest conscience, who hears with equanimity those words, "I wish to speak to you?" Will any one who may be so obliging as to read these pages think the matter over for a minute, he will instantly understand all that is not written down in fear of too lengthy a digression. But as one day was quietly added to the other, and the words were not spoken, Stella, who had hitherto continued the habit of long walks, with which Olympia had accounted for her ill looks,

began to remain in the sitting-room for hours, excessively occupied with her crochet-work. Amazing, indeed, what she accomplished in that way at this period. The first painful beating of her heart just alluded to had been followed by a hazy, dreamy pleasure. Once more it is better only to note this sensation, and to trust to its being understood, both in its cause and effect. A similar experience, however, alone can make it comprehensible. Miss Portia and her sedan had been always fixtures in that long un-homeish room. The old woman was too inquisitive to leave the family gathering, although the irritating crackling of Louis Gautier's newspapers had over and over again nearly given her an attack of her worst blues. The first time aunt Portia missed the rustle of her foes, she looked out of her sedan to make sure that the invalid was present. Yes, there he was, and with a newspaper in his hand, and Miss Stella working at one of the windows. When those little quick explosions of dry paper began again, the old head again was protruded: Miss Stella was absent. Miss Portia continued her observations, even with the aid of a pocket spy-glass, through which her prophetic sight discerned signs of an inevitable conflict. It commenced thus—Olympia began to make Stella suffer from her old inconsistencies of manner. The widow's ways were worth studying. Now unduly exalting Stella, forcing her to take the lead though Mrs. Gautier was there, referring to her decision and wishes, treating her as a queen surrounded by courtiers—the most ungraceful position for a young girl; then, at other moments, pitilessly overshadowing her in any attempt to join in the general conversation, speaking at one and the same instant as though she neither heard nor saw Stella. These were the sole occasions on which Mr. Gautier exerted himself. He would interrupt Olympia by observing, "Stella is speaking. What were you saying, Stella?"

As soon as he had checked Olympia's intolerance, Louis would take up his newspaper again, and decidedly avoid encountering Stella's glance. In those moments Olympia's eyes would be full of a fierce, uncontrollable hatred, as they settled first on one cousin and then the other. But nothing could be more unsettled than Olympia's temper; a true testimony to the heaviness of her heart. More clouds are gathering on Stella's sky. It is not to be supposed that no attentions from without the family circle were paid to Mr. Joddrell's heiress. On the contrary, invitations and offers of

service literally poured in upon her. Besides being the wealthiest girl in Jamaica, she was a beauty, and the heroine of strange, romantic stories. But not only did kindness take cognizance of the heiress of Cedar Valley, malevolence was also at work. Pretty Auntie was not alone in thinking that Stella was in a wrong position.

Mrs. Gautier and her son were not spared; they were denounced as self-seeking, self-interested—determined to take advantage of the dear girl's orphan condition. The monotony of Stella's days was broken by a paper assault. Reports travelled to England and came back again to her, accompanied by rebuke and censure, and all those galling insinuations a female pen can so politely and affectionately administer. "If I were not so deeply interested in you, my dear girl, I would not mention the subject. Believe me, I tell you what no one else ventures to say to you, but what is said in plain terms behind your back." But the worst of all to bear were covert insinuations about Louis and the widow. "She would find some day how completely she had been made a fool of. She did not see that she was used as a screen," &c. &c. Hitherto Stella had accepted life as a child accepts it. That was no longer possible. By that cruel paper war, she learned the weighty part that public opinion plays in the happiness or peace of our lives. This new, unknown power made her tremble—for she knew not how to combat it; she did not scruple to express the indignation that fired her; she wrote a distinct explanation of her situation to her aunt. Ending with these words, "that no enemies could have shown themselves more barbarous, more unjust than her friends." Nothing she dreaded more than letters from England.

More than once she had asked herself, if there were really any wrong in her remaining at Cedar Valley with the Maman and her cousin. "Because he is dearer to me than any one else in the world, is that the reason why I should propose to leave him. Where is the wrong? I cannot see it. If there be any, cousin Louis will bid me go and I will obey; not till then, though all the world write me horrible letters."

CHAP. XLVII.—CONFLICT.

THE heavy autumnal rains were come and gone. Steel gray clouds were flying low over the sky; it looked indeed as if another shower were at hand, when suddenly a broad blue expanse appeared overhead, with a bordering of rosy, pillowy clouds. The change was magical: the twittering of birds, the hum of insects, the sound of human voices—of human labour, the wholesome smell of the refreshed earth filled the air, lately so mournful with the unceasing drip and steam of heavy rain-drops. Even Miss Portia was wooed by the returning brightness and warmth to creep out of her sedan, to look at reviving nature. Louis and Olympia were in the dining-hall. They had never been left alone, by some accident, for five consecutive minutes, since they had both been inmates of the Great House of Cedar Valley. Olympia's colour came and went rapidly, her bosom heaved: she was hot and cold: she was about to throw her last throw. What a change from those days when these two persons' thoughts were exchanged freely. They still continued to say "Gautier" and "Olympia," but the familiarity of the appellations was frozen away by the tone in which either spoke to the other. "Louis Gautier!" exclaimed Olympia, at length. At once he laid aside his newspaper, and waited that she should continue her speech, his look dwelling calmly on her face. She was daunted, and tears of mortification sprung to her eyes. He immediately resumed his reading. Olympia tried to find words to put her case before him, but in vain; there was none of that enthusiasm of feeling left in her, which, torrent-like, overbears all obstacles to its free expression.

Olympia, as Nena Perez, had begun life with the ardent desire of achieving a certain social position. She set herself diligently to attain this end, thanking Providence for having made her devoid of very lively sympathies—calm, passionless. Olympia, like many others, mistook want of development for want of passion; nevertheless she was so far right in her estimate of herself, for her nature was not one of those created for, nor delighting in self-devotion. She was capable of an act of devotedness, but that is not a proof of the capability of a profound, unmixed affection. All violent persons give occasional examples of magnanimity: the sort of heroism

with which brigands and assassins astonish the world. In the long interval of separation that had lately occurred between her and Mr. Gautier, Olympia had had time for reflection on the past, and for consideration of the future. Dwelling on all she had been, as companion, friend, and disinterested aid, to Louis, she deepened the colours of the picture she drew of herself, involuntarily, as people do when they have any interest in doing so; washing away the brighter tints from Gautier's kindness to herself. A transformation of her sentiments towards him had indeed commenced from the night on which she had betrayed her jealousy of Stella. She could not forgive him the struggle it had cost him to decide in favour of friendship. The tie they had both believed everlasting was undermined from that hour. It is as old as the hills, but as true also, the saying that friendship will not last where the dignity of virtue does not preside. Olympia in loving, loved herself, her interests, her comfort, her own pleasures. As we love the source of joy, so we are apt to dislike that of pain; no wonder then that she wearied of her situation, that she felt that any result was preferable to that of a slow petrification. She was irritated by the calm benevolence with which she was treated, by the sense of her dependence on Stella. She must act; any action would and should alter her position. It was expediency, born of stubborn resolve, which prompted this appeal to Louis Gautier. "Why are you so changed, so coldly unkind?" as she asked these questions her hand was placed on his shoulder.

"The smart of a wound constantly reminds one of the hand that inflicted it," he replied.

"A wound! I don't understand; how could I have wounded you?" she said, in an excited manner.

"I am sorry you need to ask," answered Louis, with grave sadness. "You wounded me when you forswore truth, family ties, and all womanly delicacy. When you suffered the motherless daughter of your own sister to receive lover-like attentions from the man you were aware was your husband, wilfully hiding the fact from me. We were to have no secrets from one another, you remember. No thanks to you if that innocent girl has not been tortured in order to provide the amusement of an idle hour. Olympia, have you, indeed, no conception of the pang it gives me to know that all I admired and valued in you was a sham and a lie!"

"A man should feel himself very clear of conscience who flings such heavy stones at another."

"My conscience clear!" Gautier smiled bitterly; "but I am not guilty towards you, Olympia,—not guilty towards you!"

"Guilty to whom, then?" she asked, with an impossibility of restraining herself. "You are dumb? Guilty, I suppose, of not opening your arms to receive Miss Joddrell when she was ready to fling herself into them."

"Hush—hush! remember whose roof shelters you."

"Thank you for reminding me of the proper demeanour and sentiments of a dependant. Don't excuse yourself; I am perfectly aware that it is my own fault if I am so—that I ought to have refused your and your mother's kind offer. I ought to have known that one is never long indispensable to any one. It was an experience that my age warranted my having gathered. I blame no one but myself for all that is come and gone. It is never too late to mend, however, and in future I shall follow the good example set me—think only of myself." Olympia's arguments in her own favour might have stretched still further had she not glanced at Gautier to see the effect of her words. "Oh! Gautier, forgive me!" she exclaimed, when she saw his head had fallen helplessly back on the pillow.

"Don't be alarmed," he said; "a man does not die so easily."

Neither of them had observed that Stella had come to the door just at the moment that Olympia had placed her hand familiarly on Mr. Gautier's shoulder. The pain the poor girl felt was so like the stab of a sharp weapon, that she put her hand up to her bosom as if to find the wound. She did not stay a minute in the house. She ran without stopping to the burial-ground; roses bloomed now around her mother's grave. Anguish and anger rent her between them. "I wish I could tear this love out of my heart. I wish I could only care for doing good. No; I don't wish to give up loving him. I had rather be unhappy than happy not loving him. Why does she come between us again, with her artful eyes? and he knows her—knows she is not good. It makes me wicked—wicked only to think of her deceiving him again. I don't care to live if I cannot serve him. If I have to go away and leave him all the good in me will go too."

Poor young girl! how fiercely her eyes were gleaming

down on the mounds before her—all the life and passion in her to come to a quiet bed in the earth. Some such thoughts struck Stella perhaps, for she exclaimed aloud—"Knowing I shall be tranquil enough and feel no pain by-and-by, doesn't take the agony away from me now. Why was the world created if no one is happy?" There was no one near to argue with or soothe her, but placid nature rebuked her. The evening song of birds, the slanting gleam of sunshine across the graves, the gentle waving of the leaves of the trees, the breeze that lifted her hair and cooled her hot brow, reproached her with her violence.

"I am uneasy about Stella," remarked Mrs. Gautier one day, suddenly breaking the silence of the hall, and without particularly addressing any one.

"What do you see amiss about her?" asked Olympia, in a dry tone.

"Whenever I look at her," replied the Maman. "I ask myself, is she going to heaven so soon?"

You might have heard the dropping of a pin, so absolute was the hush in the room.

"Olympia!" called out Louis, presently. His voice made her start violently. She went close to his sofa, and he spoke so that she alone could hear what he said.

"You asked me the other day to whom I had been guilty, and you answered your own question. Yes, I confess it, I have been guilty to Stella. For your sake I strangled my love for her in its birth. Yes; incredible as it may seem to you, I did so, that you might never have your home of so many years made less happy to you. For scarcely had I owned to myself the strength of my feeling for my cousin, than her frankness, poor child, allowed me to see how inimical she was to you. I never thought of *you* as the enemy of my young love. I believed you more than any other mortal free of earthly taint. Proud of my own justice and strength, I used her cruelly."

"It is not too late to remedy that false step."

"Good God!" he exclaimed, "do you think that I could offer this poor crippled form, never free from pain, to any woman—to a girl rich in health, youth, and beauty. Where have I the sunshine, the gladness, the protecting strength, the bridegroom's offerings to the bride? Look at this," and he held towards her a thin, nerveless hand: he bared his wrist,

he made an effort to raise a common-sized book lying on the table by him and failed. "It is fitted, is it not, to pluck a rosebud, and to guard it?"

"Is your illness also to be laid to my charge?" asked Olympia, with a changing colour, and a voice that she tried in vain to keep steady.

"We will leave that subject alone, if you please," said Louis, coldly.

"Then I have nothing further to say to you," returned Olympia. "With your character, one-sided, as Mrs. Dashwood calls it, we should never come to an understanding again. The best thing for us both is to part."

"You are your own mistress," he said. "I had hoped you would have acknowledged the wrong you have done us all, and made our remaining together, or our parting, less bitter."

"Confessions are about as useless things as reproaches. I could never be again in your eyes what I was, though I wore sackcloth and ashes for the rest of my life. I don't choose to accept of mere goodwill. All I request is, that you trouble yourself no further about me. Perhaps I am not so black as you paint me:" and she went away queenlike.

Truly the experiences of life are bitter potions; one of the bitterest to swallow is, that friendship can turn to enmity, that the tie we thought binding may be broken by passion or interest. Neither Louis, nor the Maman, nor Stella ever saw Olympia again after that evening. She shook hands all round as they separated for the night. She hesitated a little when by Mrs. Gautier's side, holding the old lady's hand between both of hers. "Good-night, Maman," she said, twice over. The next morning, when Stella went to the stables as usual, one of the stable-boys came and told her that Madame Olympia had gone out for a ride on Kaled, and "young missus no need be uneasy," Madame Olympia left word so. This news annoyed Stella, for she had never allowed Kaled to be mounted since the day he had carried her to aunt Portia's ruined dwelling. She had learned to go every morning to Kaled's stall, without fear of his hind legs, to feed him with bread and sugar. He, on his part, had learned to know her voice, and to receive her with the whinny of pleasure formerly reserved for his master. Kaled's only discipline was the being taken out an airing by a groom mounted on another horse; no saddle was to press his back until Louis could ride him again. Not a very wise provision for the invalid's comfort and safety, but a

natural enough resolve in a romantic girl. Stella had, therefore, a moment of real anger when she heard that Olympia was riding Kaled, but when second breakfast was served, and neither horse nor lady had returned, annoyance gave place to uneasiness. "Olympia visits nowhere," said the Maman, in distress. "She must have met with an accident." Louis became even paler than usual as he remarked: "She rides well." He wished he had spoken less severely yesterday.

"I will send people to the gap" (the meeting of four roads), said Stella. "Some one must have met or heard of her."

"Send to Dr. McNiel's," cried Miss Portia, putting her head out of her sedan.

"Then you know where Olympia is gone, aunt Portia."

"Yes, Miss Joddrell, I do know!" replied Miss Portia, in her deepest, most prophetic tone. The old woman wore her former air of triumph. Ever since she had failed to foresee the events of the insurrection, so personally interesting to herself and her intimates, she had been painfully silent and humble. No inducing her to take any interest in her own concerns. She had refused any interviews with her fat negroes, leaving them in full possession of her property. Reasoning with her was in vain. "I have had enough of the world," said she, "plenty of revolutions—no progress. Virtue! thou art but a name!—sad sentence, but I fear true as sad." Miss Portia had lost all her occupations at once. Prophetess, proprietor, emancipationist, revolutionist—all gone at once. Nothing left her but her sedan-chair. As if she were radiant with oracular brevity, she pronounced her order to seek Olympia at Dr. McNiel's: her words relieved every one of her hearers. They guessed her second-sight had the sure foundation of fact. Before sunset the messenger despatched to the doctor's brought word back that Madame Olympia had been there, and had left again in company with Dr. McNiel. "Well!" exclaimed Miss Portia, significantly, and letting her eyes travel from one face to the other.

"Can you tell us when she will come back, aunt Portia?" asked Stella.

"Sleep soundly, Miss Joddrell; Madame Olympia hasn't been as safe as she is this day for many a year past:" and the window of the sedan was inexorably closed. The next day passed in expectation not the less keen that there was no continual "I wonder" beginning or cutting in two every phrase. News of the fugitive might be hoped for when the

negroes sent to the town for various stores came back in the evening. Before that, however, Lieutenant Tom Hubbard, on his charger, was seen by those in the large hall, riding by the porch. He dismounted in the yard, and instead of entering the Great House, sent to request Miss Joddrell to come out and speak to him. As Stella was passing through the door, near which was aunt Portia's sacred corner, one of the glasses of the sedan was quietly let down, and aunt Portia looked forth, nodding and chuckling. In a querulous, quavering voice she sung—

“She's o'er the sea with Jock o' Prospect House.”

Tom gave his information very concisely. “Funny, ain't it?” he observed. “I was chief mourner to her first husband, and best man to her second.” Stella could not believe it; would not believe it: “What! Olympia married to that red-faced, sandy-haired bush doctor?”

“By special licence, I assure you,” repeats Tom.

“She scarcely knew him,” says Miss Stella, aghast.

“Ah! but she did though; he's been in love with her for years. She might have married him before, if she hadn't been married already, you know,” replies Tom. “He explained it all to me; a long attachment, and all that.”

“He is so rough, and old, and ungainly!”

“Beauty is in the lover's eye,” says Tom, philosophically.

“Oh! Tom, *don't* be so tiresome; do tell me the truth.”

“I have told you the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. The parson asked: ‘Who gives this woman away?’ Then the clerk nudged me, and whispers, ‘Sir, you are to say, I do.’ So I called out, ‘I do;’ and then the doctor said, ‘I will;’ and the lady made a sort of bow. By jingo, my blood ran cold when the parson sung out, ‘For better for worse.’ I say, Stella, one must be terribly far gone not to cut and run when one hears a man laying down the law so strict.”

“It is horrible!” observes Stella.

“Well, I feel it just so,” returns Tom.

“To think of her being so rash.”

“As to that she was right to be quick about it if it was to be done. Nobody could go through with it in cold blood, you know. It's as bad as hearing the articles of war read.”

“Oh, Tom, you don't understand. The words are beautiful; it's the act of profaning them that is horrible.”

Tom whipped the leaves of the rose-bush nearest to him, and remained silent. They were walking in the path running along at the top of the barbecue, between a hedge of roses and oleanders, and in sight of the large hall. Louis from his sofa could see them as they earnestly talked. "No! I can *not* understand it," exclaimed Stella.

"Marriages are made in heaven: that's the way my mother accounts for their being so odd."

Stella gave him a look of disgust. "The law of contradiction perhaps," added Tom conciliatingly. "I can always wager what the wife's like if I see the husband, and *vice versa*. Big men always have dumpty wives; and tall women, tiny men. Look at my respected parents; the highest tip of my father's hair but just reaches my mother's shoulder. Beauty marries ugliness; it's meant to be so, in my opinion, else there would be a fine monopoly of looks and size."

"Then what a dumpty you will marry," says Stella, gravely, bridling her neck so as to look taller than usual.

"There's exceptions, you know, to every rule," replied Tom. "But, without joking, it is a serious business that marrying—once done and there you are in a regular fix—upon my soul, you are; and if a fellow marries when he's a subaltern, why, you know, he must give up his horse."

"I should advise him to be satisfied with the horse; he can change *that*, when he likes."

"Yes; and in this blessed climate, a horse is a horse. But a pretty, tidy girl to be kind to one when one's no end tired with parade, would be nice enough too! Forbes of ours looks downright jolly when his little lady is waiting on him, and petting him you can't think how. I say, Stella, ain't you rather sick of staying up here among niggers and old fogies?"

Stella opened her eyes to their greatest stretch on Tom, and some sort of glance shot from them that reduced the lieutenant to whipping the rose-bushes again. "Where is Dr. McNiel?" she asked. "Did Olympia send no letter—not even a message?"

"She wasn't very affable, I can assure you. The doctor told me he had come in for his brother's estate in Scotland—Cataract something or other—and he was retiring to the paternal house, and didn't need to be doctoring any more."

Stella thought for a little: then she said, "You had better go in and tell the news to the Maman and my cousin. I'll follow you presently."

"I can't. I shan't know what to say—they are such odd people. I never can get on with them a bit."

"But you must," said Stella, in the tone with which she had always governed him in their school-room days. She had regularly tyrannized over him then. She continued: "You were a witness of the ceremony, and naturally Mrs. Gautier would like to hear the particulars from you. Just say what you have said to me."

"Catch me; it's nothing talking to you: I can tell you anything, you know; but Gautier listens somehow in a way, you know, which puts a man decidedly out."

"Oh! now *do*, Tom. I shall be so much obliged to you."

"Well! then, of course, I must; but I say, Stella, don't leave me too long alone with them. You come in when you think I have had time to do it."

"Very well, I will; but now go."

Tom Hubbard marched up the long hall with a valiant air, eye-glass fixed; cleared his throat, and premised—"I have something very particular to say to you, Mr. Gautier—something, perhaps, that will astonish you. I'm not sure how you'll like it; perhaps you can guess." At this crisis of Tom's peroration, Mr. Gautier's pale face flushed a little, and he said in a dry, cold voice:—"I am not a good guesser, but I think I can assure you, Mr. Hubbard, that your news will not annoy me."

"Oh! very well; then it's all right, you know," replied Tom, with great alacrity. "At any rate, you know it wasn't my fault; I only did what I was asked."

Mr. Gautier opened his eyes as wide as Stella had done. "Pray explain yourself, Mr. Hubbard."

"Stella says, I must tell, because I acted father, you see, to Madame Olympia Smith when she was married, last evening, by special licence, to Dr. McNiel."

Louis Gautier nearly sprang off the sofa. "Married!" he exclaimed.

"'Pon my soul she is, that is, according to the English Church. They are to be married over again in the Roman Catholic way, when they get to England. They hadn't time here, for they had to go on board ship last night. You know, of course, it wasn't for me to bother them with questions—they were old enough to take care of themselves. Dr. McNiel wrote to ask me to the marriage, because he said your mother and Miss Joddrell would like to know it was all right."

Tom's tongue was loose enough now ; he met with no interruption from his auditors, for Mrs. Gautier had come to his side, and so had Miss Portia, with her man's hat on her head, and one hand protecting her left ear, the right being of itself sufficient to hear with.

" You have heard the news, Miss Stella ? " called out aunt Portia, as the young lady came in with a very shy face.

" Yes, aunt Portia ; " and Stella did not mean to be curious, but she was. Her glance at Louis met his at her.

Tom Hubbard was invited to stay over the night, and really for once felt himself quite at ease with the family party at Cedar Valley. The fact was, every one was thankful to talk to him, and encourage him to talk. Excepting to aunt Portia, the subject of Olympia's marriage was one touching on too many feelings not to be dangerous and painful. It was an unspeakable relief to be told of the worries of drill, and the miseries of dining in a stock, and buttoned to the chin, with the thermometer at 100 degrees ; to hear how many spaniels the colonel's wife cherished, and how few girls would venture to waltz with Tom. " They can't get up at me, and I can't get down at them, you understand." Mr. Gautier smiled, and Stella laughed outright ; but Tom was not observant enough to detect the embarrassment and nervousness of either the one or the other. The next morning, Stella was up to give Tom his coffee before he left Cedar Valley. " Don't you be in a rage with me, Stella, for what I am going to say," began Tom.

" If it is anything disagreeable, why say it, Tom ? "

" Somehow, I think it's my dooty, and a man's bound not to shirk that, and you are almost like one of my sisters. I'd think I ought to speak to Emily if she were in your place. You see, girls want brothers to tell them what's right and what's wrong."

" Then tell me," said Stella, stiffening herself, her cheeks hot as fire, and her eyes fixed on the floor.

" Well, they say——"

" I will not listen to any "they say," interrupted Stella : " it's always the preface to a meanness or a calumny. I am ready to hear and reply to whatever you please to remark, or any of your friends ; but put a name, I beg, before your observations."

" I knew you would be angry," said Tom, rather pathetically : " however, it is my dooty. My mother writes me letters, and says Mrs. Dashwood is grieved, and all that, about

your remaining here, and that you ain't in a proper position ; and my mother says, that as you won't listen to the advice of your friends, I ought to tell Mr. Gautier how much they disapprove of his conduct, in taking advantage of your youth."

"If you ever dare to say a word of the kind to my cousin," says Stella, almost in a whisper, but with eyes flashing like lightning at him, "I'll—I'll never speak to you again ; I'll kill myself—I won't bear the shame—he shall not be insulted."

"But, you know, you can't go on for ever so, and people in Kingston expect——"

"I will not hear what people expect. You have done what you think your duty, and I am not angry with you : but, Tom," here Stella visibly softened, "the Maman is old, and grows more and more feeble every day ; my cousin is a terrible invalid : they are my near relations, they need me—no one else in the world does. As long as my aunt lives—she is my aunt, for you know she is grandmamma's sister—surely she is sufficient protection for me."

"You see it's all that business of Madame Olympia's that got the Gautiers talked about," persisted Tom.

"Ah ! because the Maman and Louis were better and kinder than other people, Tom, that is the reason they are abused."

"You see when people don't understand, don't see the reason for kindness, they always suppose something wrong. It's the way of the world, Stella, and you can't change it."

"What need one care, if one is sure of being right ?"

"It ain't pleasant to have people shaking their heads and wagging their tongues for everlasting about one ; and Stella, you don't look as you used to do ; no, you don't : you have always a tired look now."

"I am no longer a child."

"Well, now, do you just think over what my old mammy says. She really does care for you in her way, you know ; we all do ; and don't you go for to sacrifice yourself out and out. It isn't right for you to be moped up here ; I wonder Gautier lets you."

"He took my passage for England—you know he did—and all the family know he did—and they know that the insurrection alone prevented my going away. How is my cousin to turn me out of my own house ?"

"I'm sure I don't see how every one is to be satisfied, only

if you'd just give yourself a chance, even in Kingston——. Well, now, there, I am done. You write home and give the folks there your reasons, will you?"

They shook hands. Tom went his way, rather depressed in spirits for him. Stella, while she appeared to be listening to a long harangue from housekeeper Manie, was saying to herself—"What may I not expect, when Tom Hubbard has taken to lecturing me?"



CHAP. XLVIII.—TREATY OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE.

It was Stella's twenty-first birthday. Her first thought when she awoke was, "Louis ceases to be my guardian; now he need never have anything more to do with me, unless he pleases. I wonder whether he will say anything to me about it to-day, or if he will wait till to-morrow." Through Mr. Boggis, a petition had been made for a holiday, "in honour of young missus's birthday." Not a hand on the plantation but knew even at what hour of the day or night young missus was born. The petition was graciously granted, on condition that there was no dancing or rejoicing near the Great House. But Stella had forgotten the certainty of birthday presents from the negroes. Such bunches of plantains and bananas, baskets of oranges, carved calabashes, long-legged fowls, and dozens of eggs; there was even a very small pig; then there were the courtesies, bows, and shaking of hands. The "Garamighty bless you, and your posterity!" equalled the gifts. Stella at last satisfies her well-wishers: the house-servants remove the provisions, and she retires into the little drawing-room, which has been tacitly given up entirely to her use. There she has her desk, and keeps a strict account of the house expenses, and makes a memorandum of all that is ordered from the stores in Kingston: there she gives her private audiences to Mr. Eff, the clergyman, about the children's school she has established; to Mr. Boggis, who has never recovered his red complexion since the 22nd of December; and to any negro who claims to be heard. In the little drawing-room she looks, quite unconsciously, the stately young *châtelaine*; in the long hall, she is again quite a girl. Her birthday was in the last week of November, and Manie has been giving her a verbal list of articles to be ordered in

readiness for Christmas. Instead of writing them down on the long, neatly folded paper before her, Stella sat with the feathered end of her pen resting against her lips, lost in meditation. "Unless he pleases, he need now have nothing more to do with me:" her brave heart flinches; if there is to be such a wrench, it will tear up the roots of her life. Her girlish hero-worship for Mr. Gautier has deepened into a faithful love, her heart has grown to him. And now that she has watched the strong man struck down in the prime of his manhood to the helplessness of a little child—has watched him for months, oh! yes, for months, patient of pain, enduring this helplessness, worse than pain, without lamentation or struggle—could she help loving him more and more? And love him she did, with all her heart, and soul, and strength, far more than in the days when he shone superior in looks to all the men she had ever seen. There is something sublime in quiet suffering,—a something that touches our hearts more deeply than beauty, or talent, or fame, or even the impetuosity of a violent passion. Stella did wake up occasionally to the recollection of Manie's list: but the thought of the impending interview, which could not but take place, always sent the amounts of rice and sugar out of her head. A dark shadow came between her and the light: she looked up—"Cousin Louis!"

"I have come to wish you many happy returns of the day. Can you leave your writing, and go with me to the seat under the mango-tree?"

"Oh, yes!" with immense inner trepidation. Mr. Gautier had walked from his own room to the little drawing-room, only a few yards, with the help of his stick alone. "Will you take my arm, cousin Louis?" He accepted the offer, the first time he had leant on her. Poor Stella! no doubt he felt the hurry of your pulse. "This is the pleasantest season of the Jamaica year," he began, when they were seated in the very spot where he had seen her in the hammock, with Johnnie pelting her with pomegranate blossoms; he went on—"No temperature in England exactly answers to this one; there it is generally too hot or too cold—sharp, biting winds and scorching suns. Do you remember once standing out in the March wind, to bring me my letters?"

"Yes," answered Stella.

"I can see you now as you were then;" Louis closed his eyes for an instant. "Let me judge if you are much changed

since that." He gazed at her, did not sigh, gave no indication of emotion, save that twitch, now so habitual that it could scarce be deemed as proving any peculiar agitation at this moment. "You are thinner, perhaps, but, thank God!" with sudden energy, "you are all that He meant you to be; capable of happiness and of giving happiness, good, kind, and innocent as you were five years ago. You cannot fathom, Stella, the comfort this conviction is to me."

Here came a pause. Actuated by a strong desire to keep up the conversation, Stella affirmed—"You are much better, cousin Louis."

"I am as well as I shall ever be. I am a cripple for life."

"Dr. McNiell said you would recover."

"Did he? He must have been bribed to say so," returned Louis, with one of his rare smiles. "Not all the College of Surgeons could put humpty-dumpty to rights again, my good cousin. Apart from the possibility of becoming a little stronger, I am as I shall be." The conversation proceeded by leaps from one subject to another. "This year I did not forget the day of your birth. Did you think I should?"

"No," said Stella, faintly.

"My guardianship ceases; a very nominal one it has been. Instead of good, I have brought sorrow to your house. Once, you recollect, Stella, I wished you to return to England; perhaps you have wondered why I have never urged it on you again, since I have been well enough to do so?" Stella's eyes now did turn anxiously on her cousin. "We are very apt to deceive ourselves," he began—then stopped. "I mean to say that, considering you were so nearly of age, I made up my mind to be silent until then. My heart was sore at first to think of the life you were leading. Then I considered that it is God's will we should do our duty in that position in which He has seen fit to place us. To you had been given over the actual possession of many fellow-creatures. I left you free to discharge your responsibilities, in the hope, Stella, that thus might be conjured from the head of the youngest and best of us any further share in the fatality which has pursued our families. If you deem otherwise, there is plenty of time left you to be a sharer in the pomps and vanity of the world." Mr. Gautier's voice during this speech had varied with the different feelings dictating it. The last words were said in so chill and dry a manner that Stella had not courage for a word. "Now I have done my sermon; there is yet a ceremony to

go through between us. I hope to place all the accounts since your father's death before you within a week or so; when you have signed a release to me, you will be your own mistress." A little impatient sigh reached Mr. Gautier's ear. "Of one thing I must warn you," he continued; "though you have been among those who have suffered least from the late insurrection, your loss is still considerable. The crop then on the bushes was half lost: prices have fallen; in short, my dear cousin, your income is reduced one-half, and your outgoings remain the same, if they are not increased. Every year you are likely to be poorer and poorer. And now this brings me to the most painful part of what I have to say."

"Oh! pray, don't!" whispered Stella.

Louis was proof against the agitated face that he had to look at. "It is necessary you should now decide on some future plan for yourself."

"Why?" was all Stella could say.

"Because now that you are of age, my mother will leave Cedar Valley with me. As long as both yourself and your estates were in my guardianship, it was under the circumstances the best, perhaps the only arrangement to be made, that of our all continuing to reside together. When we sign the accounts, Stella, we shall cry quits."

"Cousin Louis—cousin Louis!"

"I mean, that you will be able to set your aunt and your stepmother's mind at rest as to our having taken all the advantage of you they suppose. You must, Stella, be able to repel with knowledge as well as with generosity any attacks against my integrity. The indemnity I shall receive for the losses at Silver Hill will make good any claims for the support of my negroes, for I am aware they have been fed from Cedar Valley. As for the rest——"

"Then you are really going away?" she interrupted. Stella had not heard a word of his last speech.

"Really and truly. Why, Stella, you would not wish to deprive me of a home of my own."

No use for Louis to speak thus to Stella. She was too terrified at the idea of the separation to be susceptible. She put out her hand, and seized Mr. Gautier's. "Cousin Louis, don't go away—don't, I cannot bear it; it will not do. I can't——"

"My poor Stella! my poor darling!" He had no more resistance in him now; he forgot he was poor—or a cripple; he opened his arms, she laid her head on his breast, sighing

deeply. One of her arms stole up round his neck : his lips pressed her eyes, her hair, her hands. Strange, sweet murmurs were sounding in her ear. "I did not think you would have the heart to leave me all alone, cousin Louis."

"Oh! Stella, I am selfish."

"Then be magnanimous, cousin Louis! Go away from me, break my heart—it is yours; you can do as you like with it. There, you are free!" and she sat upright.

"Do you really love me so much, Stella?" and he drew her close to him again.

"How can I tell you how much? I don't know—I never shall know—I cannot count so much."

"And how much do you think I love you?"

"Never mind telling me."

"Did you never guess how much?"

"Oh! cousin Louis, how could I? Once—yes, just once—I did think you did, a very—very little. But then there have been wretched times since. I thought I hated you; but still I never had any will but to do what you wished. Cousin Louis, you *do* care for me—promise that no one will ever make you give me up.

"Give you up! care for you! what words to use to a man who, believing he had a long painful journey before him, suddenly finds himself within the Eden he had done his best to close against himself! I have dreamed of such a day as this, Stella: dreamed of it long ago." He gathered her into his arms, as a mother might have done her little child. "Oh! my darling, I hold you now; you are mine, and I am yours." He kissed her repeatedly—once more kissed her, on mouth, eyes, and brow. With one of her quick, child-like movements, she drew his head down, and pressed her lips to his hair. "Ah! foolish one, kissing gray hair." Stella's answer was stopped by a sound that jarred the nerves of the lovers. A woman's husky voice was singing, or rather muttering, close to them it seemed, but in reality on the other side of the hedge—

"Earie, Earie, de malinga,
Ma fanina ma qua.
Earie, Earie de malinga,
To to me, Earie, to to me, Earie."

Wild, weird music it was.

"It is Rebecca," whispered Stella. "I have heard her

moaning those words under my window when you were so ill. She always ran away the moment I called to her."

"Must there be a cloud on this day?" said Louis; "I never see or hear of that girl without a spasm of remorse. I refused to follow the inspiration of my guardian angel; I refused help to one in need. Stella, I want the contact of your pure heart to renew my life."

"Cousin Louis, take my hand."

"Say Louis alone."

"Louis, take my hand in yours, and promise me sacredly, that nothing but death shall us part."

"I promise that nothing but death shall us part."

"Nothing but death shall us part," repeated Stella. "Oh, Louis, to think that anything can divide us." She hid her eyes against his shoulder, as if to shut out some dreaded sight. He answered her gravely and sadly—"Shall I warn you of what would separate us more than the grave? Should I ever feel that you had a shade of regret; for I should find it out, though you hid it deep in your heart—never even acknowledged it to yourself."

"I am not afraid," she answered, simply.

A little negro boy, dressed in a white shirt, suddenly stood before Stella; the child shifted uneasily from foot to foot, his eyes rolling fearfully, betokening a crisis of perplexity. Even Mr. Gautier, in this moment of high-strung rapture, could not restrain a slight laugh. "Well, Calalue,"* said Stella, "what do you want? This is one of my best scholars," presenting the boy to Louis.

"Please, young missus, auntie Manie say you no got to stay here; Becka she down in hothouse, wait for young missus."

"Tell Manie I am coming directly, hearie?"

"Who gave the child that ridiculous name?" asked Louis.

"My gorfaders and gormoders," began Calalue.

"Go, go; massa has not time to hear you now," said Stella.

"We must go also, Louis," offering her arm, "for Rebecca never stays long."

As he rose, the remembrance of his bodily infirmity flushed his face.

"Tell me, Louis, did you really *mean* to go and leave me?"

"Very really."

"And if I had not begged you to stay, you would have gone—oh, Louis!"

* Calalue—*anglicè*, spinach.

"Do not give me credit for too much heroism. Happiness has lighted down on my heart. I feel the warmth of her soft plumage. I will put her in a cage and keep her, God willing!"

CHAP. XLIX.—FOR BETTER, FOR WORSE.

WHEN Stella reached the sick-house, Rebecca had already disappeared. The visits made by the poor crazy girl to her former home were very rare—only twice since the night of the 22nd of December had Stella seen her. Through the help of Dr. McNeil and the Rev. Mr. Eff, it had been made known to all the properties of the district, that any assistance or kindness to Rebecca would be gratefully acknowledged by Miss Joddrell. Besides this, care had been taken to furnish Rebecca with a "free pass," to prevent any zealous upholder of the slave laws from sending her to the workhouse as a runaway. In short, every precaution compassion could dictate had been taken to secure to the afflicted girl her liberty, the only good left to her. The housekeeper told Stella that she had persuaded Rebecca to put on some new clothes—that she had filled her basket with provisions, and had then left her sitting on the mounting-stone, waiting, as it seemed, patiently enough to see the young mistress. Stella was sorry to have missed her protégée; however, it was but a very little misfortune on such a day of wonderful happiness, and Stella hastened back to the house, longing to meet again the open glance of confiding love she had received for the first time. What an evening that was! The mother, with her son and his affianced bride, sat in the porch watching the decline of day; Stella's hand lay in that of Louis. There was little conversation among them; they were all under the spell of languor, like combatants reposing after a battle. They sat on after the sun had sunk—after the luminous haze he had left behind had died away into a clear gray opal twilight. Louis asked in a low voice, "Where are your thoughts, Stella—my Stella, my own peculiar star?" Eyes like stars turned on the questioner. "I was thinking," quoth his bride to be, "of that evening at Evian when grandmamma and I almost quarrelled about the world."

"You were such an experienced woman," he smilingly said, "that I should like to hear what your opinion was."

"The same as now, Louis: that the world is a beautiful place, and that one can find many friends there."

"And grandmamma thought the contrary, I suppose?"

"Ah, poor grandmamma! she was very heart-sick. I understand her better now; but then I had no idea of such feelings as hers."

"Tell me about your life with her—was she unkind to you?"

"No; rather harsh sometimes. I led a very solitary life. I envied any child that had brothers and sisters, and so I made myself air-brothers and sisters to talk and play with—and I was always wishing for bed-time, that I might go to them."

"Poor little girl! and so you think the world as beautiful as you had pictured it to yourself?"

There was just light enough for Stella to see the movement on Louis's face, like that left on the waters of a lake when a storm subsides. The occasional quiver of the muscles round the mouth imparted that expression of emotion which holds such sway over women's feelings. To Louis's half-jealous question, she answered with frank joyousness, laying her free hand over his—"Oh! yes, cousin Louis." The stars began to come out, first one, then two, until at last the sky was one wonder of brilliant lights. The lovers sat on, enjoying in the still beauty of the scene the deep tenderness of their hearts. Every sparkle in the cloudless heaven, every leaf that stood out dark in contrast, every cry of birds seeking their nest, discoursed to Louis and Stella of hope and joy to come, and the very intensity of their happiness made them ready to shed tears, but tears of the sweetest melancholy. "Come in, my children," said the Maman, waking them from their ecstacy; "the dew is beginning to fall." When seen by the light of the candles, it struck Stella that Louis was unusually pale, even for him. Was it her fancy or not? She had a sudden pang of fear, and an involuntary thought that life seemed concentrated in his eyes—the rest of his face looked like a waxen mask. "You are tired?" she said to him.

"I don't know that I am," he replied, as he lay down on his sofa; "but rest, with you by my side, your hand in mine, is very delightful."

"Shall I read to you one of your newspapers?" asked Stella—as if she were now afraid of silence.

"No; I want to enjoy the luxury of pleasant thoughts—it is so long since I had any. No; I don't care for the external world to-night, my darling." Words of tenderness from those grave, stern lips made Stella's heart beat quite wildly; she had dreamed of being allowed to love him—of his accepting her devotion—but never, never that he could call her "his darling" in such a tone, and look at her with eyes of such fond devotion. He must not—she was such a silly girl—so inferior to him—she should die of happiness if this continued.

There had been no unburying aunt Portia all day. "I feel them coming, my dear," she had whispered to Stella, through the window of her sedan. "The blues—you know—and I don't want to be troublesome this day of all the days of the year, for I saw you in the garden—just had a peep of you—and then I felt my horrors coming. I'll try and be quiet, Miss Stella." And so Miss Portia was; save when, at dinner time, the servants went near her refuge; then there was a sound of hissing, like that of a goose disturbed on its nest: but, according to aunt Portia's desire, no notice was taken. Tenderly, very tenderly—Stella had had no conception of the tenderness of a strong-hearted man—Louis blessed her when they separated at night. She had also received the Maman's maternal embrace; but a longing for more sympathy sent Stella to Mrs. Gautier's room. A Bible was open on the dressing-table, and Stella's eyes, as she bent over the Maman, read the words, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."

"Maman! and when we are so happy," exclaimed Stella, reproachfully. "Maman, you must not wish to leave us—we cannot do without you to make us good children. Read somewhere else, Maman; it makes me unhappy—it frightens me to look at that prayer."

The little scene with Mrs. Gautier had agitated Stella—and kept her long awake; when she did sleep, she was disturbed by dreams; once she awoke under the belief that there was a knocking at her door, and some one calling to her for help. She listened, but all was quiet; scarcely, however, had she laid her head on her pillow again, than she heard a light footstep in her room. Her first impulse was to hide her head beneath the bed-clothes and remain silent, but the step was approaching the bed. "Who is there?" she asked, in as steady a tone as she could muster.

"Missus, me good young missus, don't curse him as did it—curse me, missus; me de debbil dat egg him on."

"Rebecca! is that you? Come here close to me, my good Rebecca," said Stella, holding her hand out in the direction of the voice.

Rebecca came close to the young lady's side. "No cry, young missus—try be happy in Engerland; be fine young lady dere—hold up your head wid de best. No stay here, all bad, white man, black man, not a pin to choose 'tween 'em—you go in big ship and get English husband, and I die, and not care how much I punished." Rebecca was possessed by one idea; she was repeating to Stella what she had said when they had met at Cedar Valley after Mr. Jodrell's death.

"Lie down on the mat, Rebecca, and try to sleep," said Stella, soothingly. She could hear that the black girl obeyed. Presently Rebecca began talking again. "De step-moder she put her own children under one blue stripe blanket, de oder wife's single gal she put under red border one, and she say to de debbil, go kill dat you find under red blanket, den dere come little bird out of de grave—and sing, sing so sweet. Hi! you no hearie him, young missus! him say, quite plain, you got to go to Engerland."

"Perhaps I *shall* go soon," said Stella, hoping to quiet the excited Rebecca.

"Bery well—dat good gal—me satisfy now," and Stella heard her open the window and jealousies and creep through. It was the same window she had crept through the night that Louis had found the obi. Stella was now too flurried for sleep. She lay anxiously expecting the dawn, waiting for the sound of the servants stirring about the house. At last, there were whisperings and footsteps; and, as if relieved of some unacknowledged apprehension, she was dropping into slumber, when her door opened, and housekeeper Manie's tall figure appeared. "Young missus, keep brave heart, my poor chile; dey be nobody else, 'xcept you to 'pend on."

"Rebecca is dead," exclaimed Stella, jumping up. "Tell me quick, good Manie."

"Hi—my chile, worsen nor dat. Massa Louis hab bad night; he 'sturbed by some ting, he get up and he fall, and hurt hisself bad—very bad. No, Miss Stella, you no 'ab to give way: you must be brave gal now, hearie?" Manie was holding her young mistress firmly in her strong arms.

"I thought it was too much happiness for us, Manie," were her first words, laying her head on the black woman's shoulder; "he will die and leave me. Oh! Manie, my good Manie, what shall I do?"

"While de breath of life in a man, dere's hope, Miss Stella. See now, I bring paper, ink, and pen, and you write to dem biggest doctors in Kingston, we send man on horseback, and he back in no time; write to Massa Tom, he come too, that's my good chile. Stella asked no more questions. She did not dare. She wrote under Manie's guidance; Manie filling the pen each time it required ink, for Stella was too lifeless even to have energy to do that. "De ole lady, she know noting at all; get up and dress, till I send man away, hearie, my chile?" When the disastrous news was broken to Mrs. Gautier, she turned one look on Stella, only one look—O heaven! how is it that hearts do not break at once? Sooner than could have been expected, the Kingston physician, Dr. Whitehead, arrived, and Tom appeared an hour afterwards with one of the surgeons of his regiment. The unabating misfortunes of the Gautiers and the Joddrells were making them the objects of general interest. They began to be looked on almost with awe: for misfortune, when it reaches a certain height, wraps round its victim a robe of dignity. Mr. Hubbard and the surgeon had received leave of absence to remain at Cedar Valley for the present, and even the great M.D. of Kingston resolved to stay twenty-four hours with the patient. When that period had expired, Dr. Whitehead said to Stella: "I am glad to say that immediate danger is past; but this illness will end by leaving Mr. Gautier paralysed: the nerves of touch are affected; it will be gradual, a little more and a little more each day, but paralysis of those nerves is inevitable. The evil really dates from the night of the insurrection, the 22nd of last December."

"Then he is not going to die," exclaimed the girl, in so wild a tone of joy that the two medical men were startled.

"I should say certainly there is no danger to life," observed the young surgeon, compassionately, and looking significantly at the gray-haired M.D.

"Thank you, sir; thank you very much," cried Stella, pressing her hands tightly together.

"But it is worse than death," said the grave physician.

"No, no; you must not say that, sir; death separates, but mere illness does not."

The two medical men walked away from one another, hemmed and coughed. Stella pursued the physician. "Sir, I have something to say to you. I am engaged to my cousin, I love him better—oh, sir! I can't be separated from him—I *won't* be separated from him," looking in Dr. Whitehead's steady eyes. "Nothing shall make me leave him. Promise me, upon your word of honour, that you will not tell him that he will never be cured."

"I cannot give such a promise, Miss Joddrell. Setting aside other motives, I should be wrong to deceive Mr. Gautier if he asked me seriously the question of cure or no cure."

"You are not infallible," replied Stella, passionately. "We will take him to England—all over Europe; many are cured whom doctors have condemned. For God's sake, don't separate me from him; and he will insist on it, if you tell him he will not be cured; I will nurse him so well—I will pray—oh, don't be so cruel."

"Let them read Liebermann's book of missions," cried Miss Portia, putting forth her head from the sedan, a surprise that forced the medical gentlemen into most undignified saltatory motions. "There they'll see what can be done, and without the help of doctors. A man—I forget his name—prayed, folded his arms, and twenty-four hours after everything went right—success in everything, I tell you."

"Miss Joddrell is right," interposed the surgeon, the first to recover from his astonishment. "We are not infallible; change of air and scene, and a course of German baths, may do wonders."

"Yes, may they not?" broke in Stella, with such a pleading face, that Dr. Whitehead took refuge in her own saying—

"Very true; we are none of us infallible."

"Then you will not tell him that he cannot be cured?"

"I will recommend the baths of *Aqui* and *Aix* in *Savoy*," was Dr. Whitehead's answer; "they *have* performed cures."

Poor Stella! and yet not poor Stella! for who can be called poor that can bestow such wealth of consolation as she did? To look in Mr. Gautier's eyes when he heard her step, was to be convinced that she was his life. The Maman would say, "I feel when she comes into the room as if she were an angel—his pains moderate." One day Louis said to Stella—"Give me your hand, darling; I am afraid this illness of mine is going to be a very long one."

"We must make ready to go to England, Louis, and get as

fast as we can to those baths Dr. Whitehead says are so miraculous. How droll there should be the same story of their virtue being discovered by pigs as is told of the Bath waters in England."

Her voice was admirable in its indifferent tones, but her heart was throbbing painfully, for while she spoke Mr. Gautier was feeling her hand curiously—now fixing his eyes on it—now turning away. "I could declare," he said, "that my fingers were numbed."

"And, Louis," went on Stella, her face growing crimson, then deadly pale, "I think it would be better if we could—if we should——"

"What do you wish me to do, Stella. I will do anything you please or desire—alas! I am so helpless." She put both her arms round his neck and whispered to him. Tears, hot tears, fell from his eyes on her neck.

"Don't cry, Louis, I cannot bear it; you will kill me." He was trying to unclasp her arms, that he might see her face, but he had not strength even to do that. "You promised me—you promised me," she kept on repeating.

"Am I then so helplessly ill, Stella?" he asked.

"I have written to Auntie, and told her that—that we were to be married directly; if we wait till we are in England, oh! Louis, think of the Hubbards, and Mrs. Joddrell, and Auntie—they will take me away from you, and *could* you do without me, Louis?"

"I am afraid not very well, nor for very long," he said, with a heavy sigh.

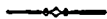
The next time Dr. Whitehead paid his visit to Cedar Valley, he was closeted for some time with Mr. Gautier. Stella was waiting in an agony of suspense.

"Well!" she said, seizing the M.D.'s arm, as he left the invalid. Dr. Whitehead's somewhat hard face was now full of repressed emotion.

"God forgive me, Miss Joddrell, for withholding my opinion from that excellent man. Young lady, never slacken in your tender care of him, or you will have an extra sin on your conscience, that of having forced an honest man to play with what he believed to be the truth." Mr. Gautier cross-examined the surgeon, no fear there; the young man had adopted Stella's view of the case, and in perfect good faith, predicted the success of German or Swiss baths. He brought up a long list of similar cases ending in entire cures

It was a very solemn marriage, that of Louis and Stella; they were married by special licence at Cedar Valley. It would have been unsafe to let Louis risk trying to ride to the church, and to be carried thither on such an occasion Stella guessed would hurt his feelings.

The Maman, aunt Portia, Tom Hubbard, and Mr. Boggis were alone present. Stella had asked Louis to let the faithful overseer give her away: it was a mark of gratitude and trust he deserved for many services rendered during the last two trying years. To his care were left the estates and Miss Portia Lowe.



CONCLUSION.

"There is a comfort in the strength of love.
'Twill make a thing endurable, which else
Would break the heart."—WORDSWORTH.

PERHAPS some English travellers in search of health or change may remember to have met, years ago, on their route or at bathing establishments in Germany and Italy, a party of four persons. A beautiful, pale young woman, her face more remarkable for its expression than even its regular features. An expression, at once decided and full of goodness, loyal and frank—softening with a golden smile of love when her look met that of her husband. He was a helpless cripple, but had a magnificent head, and his eyes were wonderfully beautiful. Every foreigner attached a romantic story to the English invalid and those with him; the few with whom he conversed were charmed by a manner only to be described as playful sadness.

A quiet, small old lady, with hair white as snow, and a tall, strong, elderly negress, were the inseparable companions of the husband and wife. Wherever they went these people excited an extraordinary interest. They were not rich, yet they always obtained good rooms and attendance at hotels and baths. As Stella passed on her way, kind voices called to her, "Hope on, dear lady."

THE END.

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